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ABSTRACT

Six papers address issues in the transition from school to work for mentally retarded and developmentally disabled young adults. The first presents a three-stage vocational transition model emphasizing functional curricula, integrated services, community-based instruction, involvement of parents and adult services representatives, and a diversity of options for the client. The second paper presents findings from interviews with 300 parents of young adults with mental retardation. An overall unemployment rate of 58% was revealed. The third paper discusses employment-oriented instructional guidelines and curriculum suggestions for students at elementary, intermediate, and secondary levels. A study of community integration of 300 young adults is presented in the fourth paper, with results indicating that the individuals were generally satisfied with their present situation. Paper 5 describes a study of the employment status of 117 young adults with moderate, severe, or profound mental retardation. High unemployment rates of nearly 88% were found with only 14 persons holding real jobs in nonsheltered work environments. The final paper applies the supported work model to job placement of students in the public schools. (CL)

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Transition from School to Work

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FROM SCHOOL TO WORK: A VOCATIONAL TRANSITION MODEL FOR HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present a three-stage vocational transition model for handicapped youth who move into adulthood. The model is characterized by the need for secondary programs which reflect functional curriculum, integrated services, and community-based instruction. The transition process should be initiated well before graduation, should involve parents and adult service representatives, and be formalized. Postsecondary vocational alternatives should reflect paid employment outcomes and there should be a diversity of options available for mildly, moderately, and severely handicapped youth. Finally, greater follow-up of handicapped students into adulthood by school systems is mandatory if we are to assess how effective our programs are in reducing the extraordinarily high unemployment rate of disabled persons in this country today.

In most school systems in this country today handicapped students are not guided into employment opportunities appropriate for their abilities. Although there are varied degrees of vocational training and education experiences made available to many handicapped students, systematically planned transition to positions in industry and business is not usually available. Similarly, communication between school personnel and adult service providers is typically limited. Hence those students in need of further intensive vocational training are not specifically directed to the necessary services.

To a very significant extent this vacuum of systematic vocational transition probably accounts for the continued high unemployment rate of handicapped individuals. The U. S. Commission on Civil Rights in a recent study (1983) reports that between 50 and 75% of all disabled people are unemployed. An excellent follow-up study of handicapped students in Vermont (Hasazi, Preskill, Gordon & Collins, 1982) reflects similar figures of unemployment as do the preliminary results of a follow-up study we are completing in Virginia (Wehman, Kregel, & Seyfarth, 1984). In Colorado, another follow-up study indicates that while over 60% of the recent special education graduates were working, there was a high level of underemployment and very poor wages (Mithaug & Horivuch, 1983).

This problem has not escaped federal attention. New program initiatives are underway through Public Law 98-199, the Education for Handicapped Children amendments. A major section of these amendments involves funds and support for secondary education and transitional services. In a rationale for this section of the Act it was noted:

"...the Subcommittee (on the Handicapped) recognizes the overwhelming paucity of effective programming for these handicapped

youth, which eventually accounts for unnecessarily large numbers of handicapped adults who become unemployed and therefore dependent on Society. These youth historically have not been adequately prepared for the changes and demands of life after high school. In addition, few, if any, are able to access or appropriately use traditional transitional services. Few services have been designed to assist handicapped young people in their efforts to enter the labor force or attain their goals of becoming self-sufficient adults, and contributing members to our society." (Section 626, P.L. 98-199).

Transition is a term which has been used in professional circles frequently (Brown, Pumpian, Baumgart, VanDeventer, Ford, Nisbet, Schroeder, & Gruenwald, 1981). The U. S. Dept. of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services has made transition a major priority. The Assistant Secretary of this office, Madeleine Will, and her staff developed a conceptual transition model (1984) which is characterized by an emphasis on quality secondary programs, a description of generic employment services, time-limited employment services, and on-going employment services, and finally an array of different adult employment alternatives. Specifically, each of these three employment services are viewed as a "bridge" from school-to-work. Generic services are those that are already available to nonhandicapped people in the community i.e. personnel agencies, and would probably be used by mildly handicapped consumers. Time-limited services, on the other hand, are specialized rehabilitative or other adult services which are uniquely suited to help a disabled person gain employment. However, they come to an end at some point once the individual is successful. On-going employment services have traditionally not been available in most communities but would be aimed at hard-to-place disabled people.

The federal transition initiative has obviously spanned many new training efforts and stimulated renewed attention to this pressing problem. We have developed a specific definition of transition for the purpose of this paper:

> "Vocational transition is a carefully planned process, which may be initiated either by school personnel or adult service providers, to establish and implement a plan for either employment or additional vocational training of a handicapped student who will graduate or leave school in three to five years; such a process must involve special educators, vocational educators, parents and/or the student, an adult service system representative, and possibly an employer."

The key aspects of this definition are that a) members of multiple disciplines and service delivery systems must participate, b) parental involvement is essential, c) vocational transition planning must occur well before 21 years of age, d) the process must be planned and systematic, and e) the vocational service provided must be of a quality nature. Transitioning a severely handicapped 20 year old student who is learning letters of the alphabet, days of the week, coloring and other minimally functional skills into a different setting (such as an adult activity center) with the same training objectives accomplished little and distorts the purpose of the transition initiative.

It is the purpose of this paper to present a three-stage vocational transition model that encompasses the important components of facilitating the movement of handicapped youth from school to the workplace. Following this model, we will describe critical aspects of appropriate secondary programs which affect meaningful transition and review selected employment outcomes that need to be available in the community after school. Finally we present transition evaluation data on a group of mentally retarded young adults who are or have been competitively employed. These data are reviewed in the content of the conceptual model

presented within this paper. This model applies to all handicapped students.

A Model for Vocational Transition of Handicapped Youth

Facilitating transition from school to the workplace is not a one step process. It requires movement through three stages of school instruction, planning for the transition process and placement into meaningful employment. With the increased federal emphasis on transition, it is essential that service providers and agencies do not exclusively focus on the transition process while ignoring the quality of the foundation services offered by public schools and the range of vocational alternatives offered by community agencies. Previous efforts at interagency agreements which purported to ameliorate transition problems actually resulted, in all too many cases, in movement of a student from one inadequate school program to another inadequate adult program.

Figure 1 presents a model which we feel overcomes the shortcomings of earlier attempts at transition and builds upon successful efforts which have previously occurred. As illustrated in the figure an appropriate special education program is characterized by functional curriculum (Wehman, Bates, & Renzaglia, 1985) in a school setting which reflects integration with nonhandicapped peers (Certo, Haring, & York, 1983) and which provides for a community-based instructional model of school services (Wehman & Hill, 1982). These secondary program characteristics are fundamental to vocational transition. The actual transition process includes a formal individualized transition plan which is highlighted by significant parental input and cooperation from key agencies such as rehabilitation. Finally, neither the school program or planning process is sufficient without a range of varied work or employment outcomes available to students after graduation.

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Public School: The Foundation of Effective Transition

Preparing students to be independent in their living skills and employable in the marketplace should be the major goals for the educational system. Without careful planning and preparation for post-school placement, these goals are seldom achieved by handicapped youth. However, over the past few years, critical program characteristics which contribute to effective programming have been identified (Bates, Renzaglia, & Wehman, 1981). These characteristics provide the foundation for meaningful transition from school to the workplace; therefore, it is of little value to discuss transition without crystallizing several key programming components. Critical characteristics of an appropriate secondary program include a) functional curriculum, b) integrated schools, and c) community based service delivery. These critical components of secondary programming are presented in Table 1.

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Functional Curriculum

Training activities must be designed to prepare persons for vocational opportunities that are available in their community. To ensure this outcome, school personnel must continuously assess available community employment and analyze the specific skills required for successful job performance. As a result of this activity, the vocational curriculum for specific students can then be identified. In designing functional secondary programs, selection of vocational skills must not be based on convenience and should not be based on donation of equipment to the school or on stereotypic views of what people believe handicapped youth should do when they grow up. Instead, functional curriculum reflects skills required in actual local employment situations. Usually, developmental curriculum materials and guides will not provide the most direct and efficient approach.

functional curriculum will ensure that the training content is generalizable to potential jobs and will facilitate eventual movement into the labor force.

Often vocational training for handicapped youth does not begin until approximately 15-16 years of age. Since many handicapped youth learn very slowly, common sense dictates that vocational experiences should begin early and continue through their school years. Early vocational emphasis does not mean that we put five year old children on job sites for training. It does mean that we select appropriate vocational objectives for training at each age level (Wehman, 1983). The objectives should reflect behaviors which are important to community functioning and employment, be useful for the student, and be consistent with the expectations of similarly aged, nonhandicapped peers. It means that we begin early to instill in children and their parents the feasibility of employment and the importance of work for a normalized existence.

Hence the functional approach to vocational training is also longitudinal. Students begin developing skills early with increasing involvement as they become older. These longitudinal activities should result in gains in vocational skills (e.g., attending; competitive production rate; broadened range of jobs a student can perform; production quality; etc.) and in job related skill areas e.g., independent mobility; appropriate selection of clothing; ability to interact socially with coworkers; etc.). As a result, students will graduate with an increased chance of either already being employed or in an excellent position to become employed.

Integrated School Services

It is generally accepted that in order to prepare persons for life and work in integrated settings, it is necessary to provide these individuals exposure to and experience in dealing with the demands and expectations of these environments. Therefore, it is imperative that training occur in integrated settings. Emphasis

needs to be placed on training which occurs as much as possible in integrated, as opposed to exclusively handicapped, facilities. The effective vocational training program also includes regular exposure to natural work settings. Natural work settings are defined as real job situations in the community. Students should train and work in the community whenever possible. This is not only to expose them to the community and work expectations, but to expose future employers and coworkers to their potential as reliable employees. Fortunately, there is a slow but perceptible move toward integrated school environments in the country (Certo, Haring, & York, 1983) and it appears that this form of service delivery will be a truly vital aspect of meaningful transition into natural work environments.

Community-Based Instruction

Students over the age of 12 will need to participate for progressively extended periods of time. Job training sites should be established in vocations where there is a potential market for employment. Staff must be provided to conduct job site training. Systematic instruction should be conducted at these community sites. Behaviors that should be targeted include acquisition of specific job skills, production rates, mobility and interpersonal skills.

The necessity for community-based instruction is related to the two previously mentioned components of functional curriculum and integrated services. It should be clear that the best curriculum in the most integrated school will still not enhance employment focused transition without steady practice and experience in community work situations. Previous experiences indicate a principle reason for vocational failure on the part of significantly handicapped people is their lack of exposure to natural job environments like hospitals, fast food restaurants, and offices (Rudrud, Ziarnak, Bernstein, & Ferraro, 1984).

In sum, functional curriculum objectives prepare students to learn

appropriate skills, an integrated training environment enhances interpersonal skills with nonhandicapped workers and other peers, and community training enhances each of these components by allowing students an opportunity to practice in real situations. Educational programming which reflects these tenets will help students prepare for the next phase in the model.

Planning for Vocational Transition: The Process

As has already been observed, unless specific and formalized planning for vocational transition occurs, students will not receive a quality postsecondary program or enter the labor force. Therefore, even an excellent secondary program with good adult service alternatives available cannot benefit handicapped youth without planning and coordination of services. Referral back to Figure 1, the three stage transitional model described earlier, indicates the necessity of having a formal transition plan and delineating responsibilities of staff and participating agencies. Consumer input from parents and students and interagency coordination are essential. This process is briefly described below.

Formal Individualized Student Plans

The focal point of the vocational transition process is the development of a formal, individualized transition plan for every handicapped student. Without a written plan specifying the competencies to be acquired by the student and the transition services to be received prior to and following graduation, the other major elements of the transition model will have little impact. The plan should include annual goals and short term objectives which reflect skills required to function on the job, at home, and in the community. Transition services should also be specified, including referral to appropriate agencies, job placement, and on the job follow-up.

Transition plans should be comprehensive in scope. Working in the community requires many different skills. In addition to specific job skill training,

students must also be prepared to effectively use community services, manage their money, travel to and from work independently, and interact socially with other individuals. Plans must address all these skill areas to meet the comprehensive needs of handicapped students. Plans should also be individualized. Not every individual will be prepared for the same post-school environments. Similarly, each individual will require a different set of post-school services. Plans must focus on the needs of specific persons, rather than on the general needs of classrooms or categories of exceptionality. In addition, transition plans should identify who is responsible for initiating and following through on each specified activity.

Finally, transition plans must be longitudinal in nature. This requires the participation of all individuals and agencies involved in the transition process during the initial development of the plan. The plan should first be developed four years prior to an individual's graduation and then modified at least once a year until the individual has successfully adjusted to a post-school vocational placement. While in school, the transition plan should be considered a section of the student's IEP. After leaving school, the plan can be a component of a client's Individual Written Rehabilitation Plan, if he or she is served by vocational rehabilitation, or part of the individualized service plan of a community service agency. While the agency assuming major responsibility for services will change over time, the participants involved in developing and modifying the plan should remain the same during the course of vocational transition, thereby assuring continuity of goals and services.

Consumer Input

The informed participation of parents and guardians is a critical component of the vocational transition process. Parents should be made aware of the employment alternative available to their son and daughter upon graduation. They

must be provided an opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to effectively participate in transition planning. Public schools should initiate parent education activities to provide consumers with background information. Systematically planned parent education programs will improve the effectiveness and durability of parent involvement in the vocational transition process.

Parent education activities should begin at least by the time the student reaches the age of sixteen. Content should be based on problems and concerns identified through needs assessment activities. Horton and her colleagues (Horton, Maddox, & Edgar, 1983) have developed a parent questionnaire needs assessment which can be used to specify the needs of students and parents. The major areas of concern identified by the assessment process can then be addressed through parent meetings and program visitations.

Parent education meetings, sponsored by public schools or advocacy groups, are an effective method of training parents to represent their child's vocational interests. Meetings should: 1) orient parents to the community agencies providing post-school services to handicapped individuals; 2) familiarize parents with the specific responsibilities of special education, vocational education, vocational rehabilitation, and adult service programs in the vocational transition process; and 3) prepare parents to work with various agencies to develop transition plans and to apply for future services. Parental visits to local adult service facilities are also useful. School systems may be able to assist in arranging visitations. They may also provide information to parents about what to look for during a visitation and ways to compare different service programs. This "first-hand" information should help alleviate parental concerns and fears about their child's future, and should enable them to knowledgably participate in transition planning (Anderson, Beckett, Chitwood, & Hayden, 1984; Wehman, Hayden, & Kitt, 1984).

Interagency Cooperation

Interagency cooperation refers to coordinated efforts across agencies such as public schools, rehabilitation services, adult day programs, and vocational-technical training centers to insure the delivery of appropriate, nonduplicated services to each handicapped student (Horton, Maddox, & Edgar, 1983). This concept has been widely advocated (Lacour, 1982; Greenan, 1980) as an effective management tool that will aid the development of fiscally accountable human service systems. Federal legislative mandates actively promote cooperative activities as a means of conserving resources and reducing inefficiency. The varied service needs of handicapped individuals demand the development of an array of available programs to meet the full service provisions of P.L. 98-199 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Unfortunately, efforts to encourage interagency cooperation have had little impact on the design and delivery of services. Although approximately 35 states have developed formal interagency agreements, and many communities have implemented local agreements, numerous problems persist. Agencies differ widely in their diagnostic terminology and eligibility criteria. Services continue to be duplicated, while communities fail to initiate programs (for example, supported work placement) which are needed to complete a local continuum of services. Political and attitudinal barriers also inhibit interagency cooperation. Administrators often enter collaborative efforts suspicious of the intentions of other agencies, defensive of their own "turf", and fearful that interagency cooperation may lead to budget cuts and termination of programs.

A number of specific steps can be taken to overcome the obstacles cited above and increase the likelihood of cooperation. Information exchange must occur to identify the legislative mandates, types of services provided, eligibility requirements, and individualized planning procedures of each of the participating

agencies. Intensive staff development activities must then occur to enable administrators and direct service personnel in developing an understanding of the regulations and potential contributions of other agencies. This investigation should result in a restructuring of services to eliminate duplication and to guarantee that options are available to meet the service needs of all handicapped individuals. Finally, the process must result in the involvement of appropriate agencies in joint planning activities.

Multiple Employment Outcomes

The outgrowth of appropriate secondary special education and a meaningful transition plan should be employment. However, in many communities there are few or no employment opportunities. Obviously, it is essential that communities provide many different vocational alternatives, or successful transition cannot occur. The prospect of having an adult activity center which only focuses on activities of daily living, or a workshop which provides only bench work is too limiting for the broad range of learning abililties of young handicapped adults. In this section, we present several types of alternatives which might be available for persons with all types of disabilities. It should be noted that we do not present these as a developmental continuum but rather a series of selected options or opportunities. Also, one needs to be aware that there are probably many other creative options or combinations of alternatives which may be considered. Figure 2 presents a brief schematic of several of the outcomes which are described below.

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Competitive Employment

Many mildly handicapped persons have the ability to work competitively if given the opportunity (Brolin, 1982). These individuals, who may have physical,

sensory or learning disabilities, will require only help from a work experience coordinator or rehabilitation counselor in job seeking and initial adjustment skills. If the school program experience have been rich in quality and diversity, many mildly handicapped persons will be able to work in a variety of fields, often beyond the stereotypical vocations of food service and custodial areas. Critical attention must be given to a) developing social interpersonal skills and b) providing more challenging types of jobs than have been performed in the past.

Competitive Employment With Support

Competitive employment should also be made available to handicapped individuals who need more help getting a job, learning and adjusting to a job, and holding a job (Revell, Wehman, & Arnold, in press; Wehman, 1981; Wehman & Kregel, 1984). It is obvious from previous placement experiences that many persons with mild, moderate, and severe mental handicaps, autism, behavior disorders, or multiple handicaps do not fare well in competitive employment. Generally, there are difficulities in learning and performing the job, greater parental concerns, transportation problems, and also fears of losing social security payments. Yet fortunately there are programs and efforts underway which are now demonstrating how supported work through the use of an on-going job coordinator can help this historically unemployed population gain entry intc the labor force (Brickey & Campbell, 1981; Rusch & Mithaug, 1980; State of Washington Developmental Disabilities, 1984; Wehman, Hill, Goodall, Cleveland, Brooke, & Pentecost, 1982).

A supported work approach to competitive employment emphasizes structured assistance in job placement and job site training (Wehman, 1981). A job coordinator is available extensively for individualized 1:1 training and follow-up. A strong focus of this model is helping individuals maintain their jobs. While at first glance it might appear too expensive, in fact, there is a significant cost savings due to the amount of money it costs to rehabilitate this population

as well as a reduction in the social security transfer payments (Hill & Wehman, 1983).

Enclaves in Industry

Another possible vocational outcome for more substantially disabled persons is the sheltered enclave. With this approach small groups of disabled individuals (less than six) are employed in business and industry under the daily supervision of a trained human service staff persons. The enclave is attractive because it offers disabled clients who traditionally have been excluded from employment services the opportunity to work in a natural work environment such as business or industry, usually for a decent wage. The hours and working conditions may be more limited and unlike either of the previously mentioned alternatives. Fringe benefits are not usually an option. In addition, although breaks and lunch provide for integration with nonhandicapped coworkers, with most enclaves disabled workers are placed together on a special set of tasks. The sheltered enclave may be a good opportunity for some severely disabled workers to eventually move into part or even full-time competitive employment.

Specialized Industrial Training

Specialized industrial training is another employment option which usually takes place in a small industrial-oriented workshop setting. Contract revenue from business and industry provides wages for clients. This alternative has been available to severely and profoundly mentally retarded individuals, particularly in several states in the Pacific Northwest (Bellamy, Horner, & Inman, 1979; Paine, Bellamy, & Wilcox, 1984). This employment alternative is characterized by being small, usually with less than 20 workers. Typically, programs are based in the community and provide employment through performance of complex assembly and production contracts. Electronic parts assembly, chain saw assembly, and varied high technology tasks have been trained successfully with these workers going on

to earn wages which they would never have approximated in a traditional work activity center. In addition, nonhandicapped workers may be employed in the same program. The specialized industrial approach requires a) a high competence level of staff in behavior modification and business skills and b) a commitment to small, community-based vocational programs which focus on employment.

It will be instructive to reiterate that there are other alternatives such as mobile work crews, work stations in industry, resource sharing and cooperative agreements with industry, etc. which should also be considered. In planning for transition, the nature of the options need to be evaluated carefully because these potential outcomes will determine the curriculum objectives upon which to focus, the best service delivery approach to select, and also help prepare the student, parent, and adult service providers for the transition. There needs to be a fusion of information about the student between the school personnel and adult service providers.

In selecting which outcome is appropriate one must consider availability of alternatives in community, student's choice, and student's capability. These factors obviously are interrelated and play a major role in determining where a student's first job might be. It should also be noted that none of these should be seen as necessarily terminal, but rather different options available.

Transition Evaluation Data

In an effort to assess the employment status and transitional success of handicapped youth leaving school, we analyzed a selected amount of job placement data which have been collected over the past six years at the Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center. These data reflect information relevant to the 55 18-22 year old mentally retarded individuals we placed. While these data cannot be viewed as a specific empirical validation of the previously described conceptual model for transition, they do

give some insight as to the employability of handicapped youth.

In Table 2 is an analysis of a number of the salient features of this sample. As can be seen, most individuals (77%) were receiving federal financial subsidies before placement, many (65%) came from segregated school programs, and only one-third had the opportunity to receive community-based vocational training. Furthermore, another one-third had received no vocational education. Approximately half were classified as moderately or severely retarded and one half with mild retardation or mild retardation and secondary handicaps such as cerebral palsy. The classifications reported in Table 2 were generated through the case records of the job placement coordinators responsible for each of these clients.

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Using a criterion of six months of continuous employment in initial job as one measure of successful placement, it was determined that 55% of the population was successful and 45% unsuccessful. This needs to be partially qualified, however, by indicating that only about one-third (32%) were actually terminated or resigned with the other 13% being laid off due to the economic recession in 1981-82. As Table 3 indicates there were no statistically significant difference between the mild/multihandicapped group and moderate/severe group when it came to assessing successful versus unsuccessful job tenure. This is interesting in the sense that there is a common perception among many special education and rehabilitation professionals that level of retardation is a critical factor in gaining and holding competitive employment (e.g., Brolin, 1982). At least in this group that was not the case.

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[1] We are deeply indebted to Janet Hill and David Banks for helping us pull together the data below for this analysis.

Perhaps an equally interesting finding and one which tends to support the importance of integrated secondary programs is that there is a higher representation of people from segregated schools (50%) who fail in their first job before six months. Only 26.6% of those students who come from integrated schools fail during this time period. Obviously, bigger samples and a priori experimental controls will be necessary to further assess the generalizability of this finding. Finally we looked at several outcomes related to what happened to these clients as an apparent result of their new competitive jobs. Table 3 shows that there was an increase from 15% to 60% of clients being independent in their use of public transportation. Seven percent fewer were living with their parents after six months of employment. The prorated annual income prior to placement was $211; the new full-time income moved up dramatically to $7280.

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As noted earlier, these data provide only a profile of what one group of mentally retarded young adults' competitive employment progress has been. We were only interested in the supported competitive employment alternative. It should be pointed out that these individuals received special demonstration services from federal grants to the senior author, and therefore, these were unique circumstances from most school systems and adult programs. Notwithstanding this fact, it is clear that we have a long way to go to improve the employability and especially retention of this population. These data only focused on a) those referred to our program and b) those placed and followed. They do not reflect the many young adults who may have had adverse conditions surrounding their prospects for employment (e.g., unsupportive parents) or those individuals for whomever were unable to find suitable jobs. What is required to validate the model described in this paper is to assess over a long period of time whether students who receive

the secondary program and transition processes proposed perform better in competitive employment than those who do not. The data presented herein obviously is not a systematic assessment of this situation.

Necessity of Student Follow-Up

In closing, it should be noted how essential it is for school systems to provide follow-up of their special education graduates. It will be very difficult for the field to assess how effective school instruction and adult service employment efforts are unless we regularly evaluate what former students are currently doing as young adults. There is no accurate way to determine the effectiveness of transition plans until school systems begin to more frequently monitor the success or failure of recent students' activities as adults. Therefore, a major recommendation of this paper is for all school systems to provide regular follow-up of special education graduates on a minimum of every two to three years. This report should be presented to the local school board and state agency for public instruction and become a matter of public record.

The follow-up process should uncover information concerning each individual's employment status, student and parent satisfaction with the individual's present status, employer evaluation of work performance, and consumer satisfaction with the transition program. Information regarding an individual's employment status, type of job, specific job duties, and current wages will aid in identifying the specific vocational training programs to include within the secondary curriculum. Discovering the reasons why some students are not currently employed may reveal areas in which existing programs can be improved. Attention should also be paid to the individual's own perception of his or her present job status. Is the individual satisfied with his or her current job? Would he or she be interested in obtaining a different job or receiving additional vocational training? Are the individual's parents satisfied with the work their child is performing? This

information will not only aid in program development, but will also identify the support services most needed by program graduates. Employer evaluation of work performance will enable service providers to determine whether vocational training programs are equipping clients with all the skills necessary for success in employment. Finally, follow-up procedures should provide opportunities for former students, parents, and employers to express their opinions concerning the effectiveness of the transition process.

Conclusion

In this paper we have presented a rationale and definition for meaningful transition and a three stage model for how to implement transition programs for handicapped youth. A major part of this article has been directed toward emphasizing the necessity for functional curriculum in integrated educational settings with community based training opportunities. In addition, it was strongly suggested that written individualized transition plans be established with significant parental input. Finally, a series of employment opportunities were presented as community service vocational outlets for special education graduates.

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Table 1

Secondary Program Components

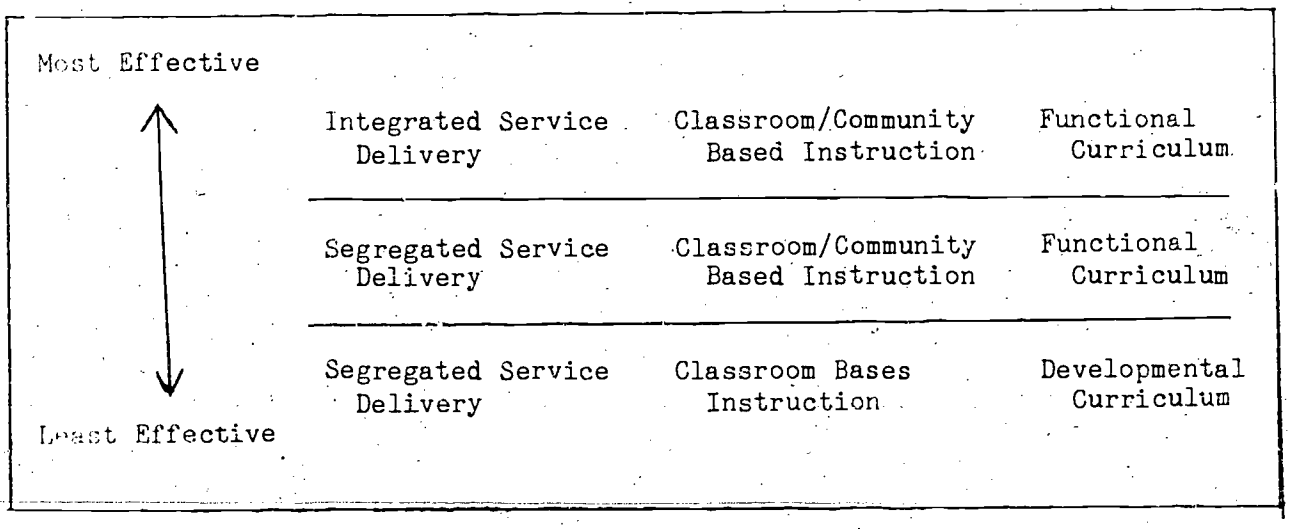


Table 2

Analysis of Client Population (18-22 yrs. old) at Time of Placement
(N=55)

Category		Percent of Number
Sex:		
Male		75%
Female		25%
Receiving Government Financial Support		
Yes		77%
No		23%
Served in an Adult Activities Center		
Yes		2%
No		98%
Served in Sheltered Workshop		
Yes		20%
No		80%
Mean Years in Public School		12 Years
Type of Secondary Placement		
Integrated		35%
Segregated		65%
Type of Classroom Placement		
Self-contained		100%
Mainstreamed/Resource		0%
Type of Work Training at Secondary Level		
None		33%
In-School Only		33%
Community Based		33%
Academic Skills		
Arithmetic:	None or simple counting only	41%
	Simple addition or subtraction	59%
Reading:	None to limited word recognition	64%
	Simple reading	36%
Measured Intelligence		
Severe		2%
Moderate		48%
Mild and/or Multiple Handicap		50%

Table 3

Related Outcomes of Employment

Prior to Placement for 55 Clients		Outcomes of Placement for Same 55 Clients	
Independence in Use of Public Transportation	15%	Independence in Use of Public Transportation	60%
Living With Parents or Family	92%	Living With Parents or Family	85%
Mean Annual Income Year Prior to Placement	$211	Mean Income Prorated Annually	$7280-Full time $3640-Part time

FIGURE 1

THREE STAGE VOCATIONAL TRANSITION MODEL FOR HANDICAPPED YOUTH

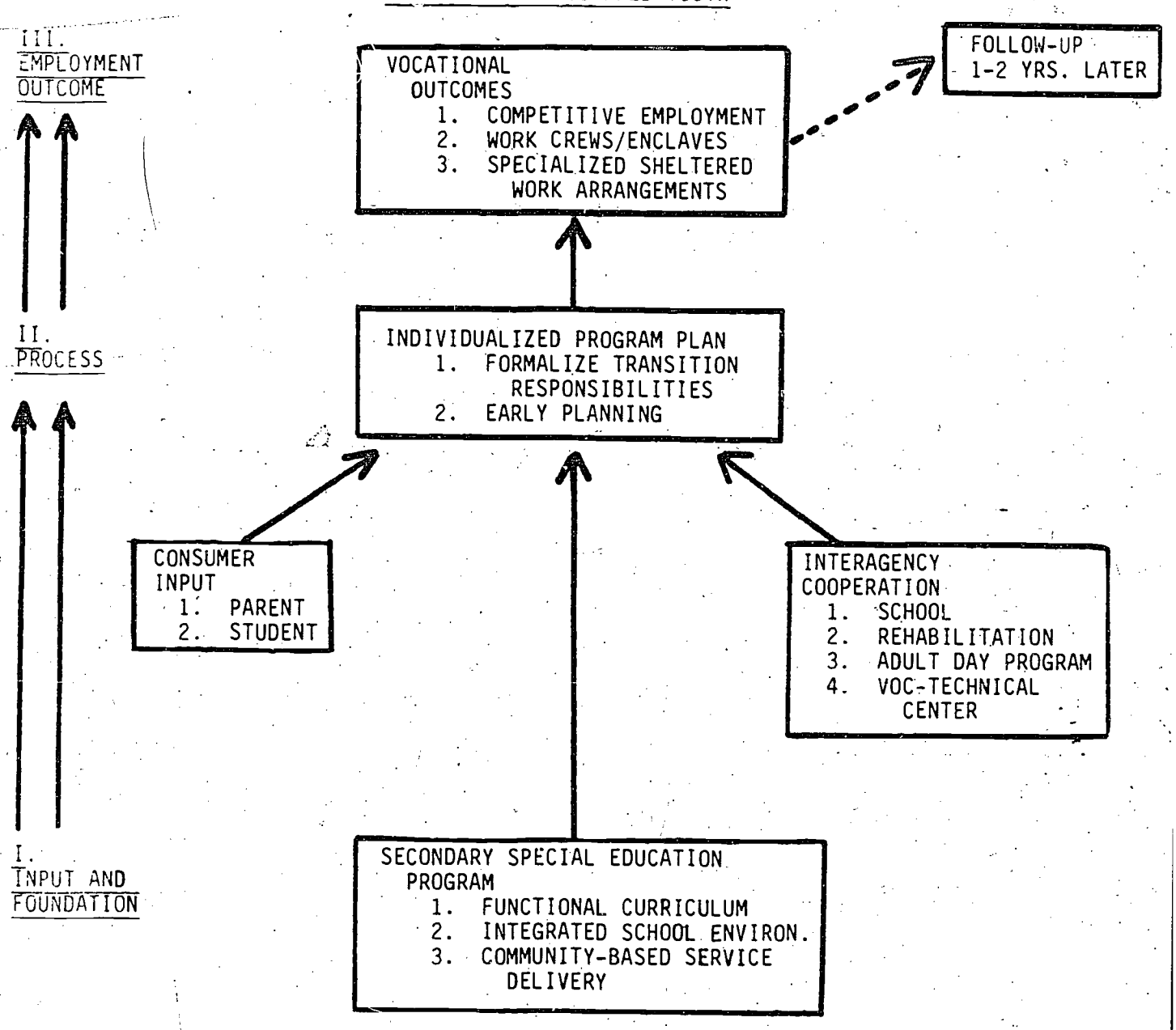
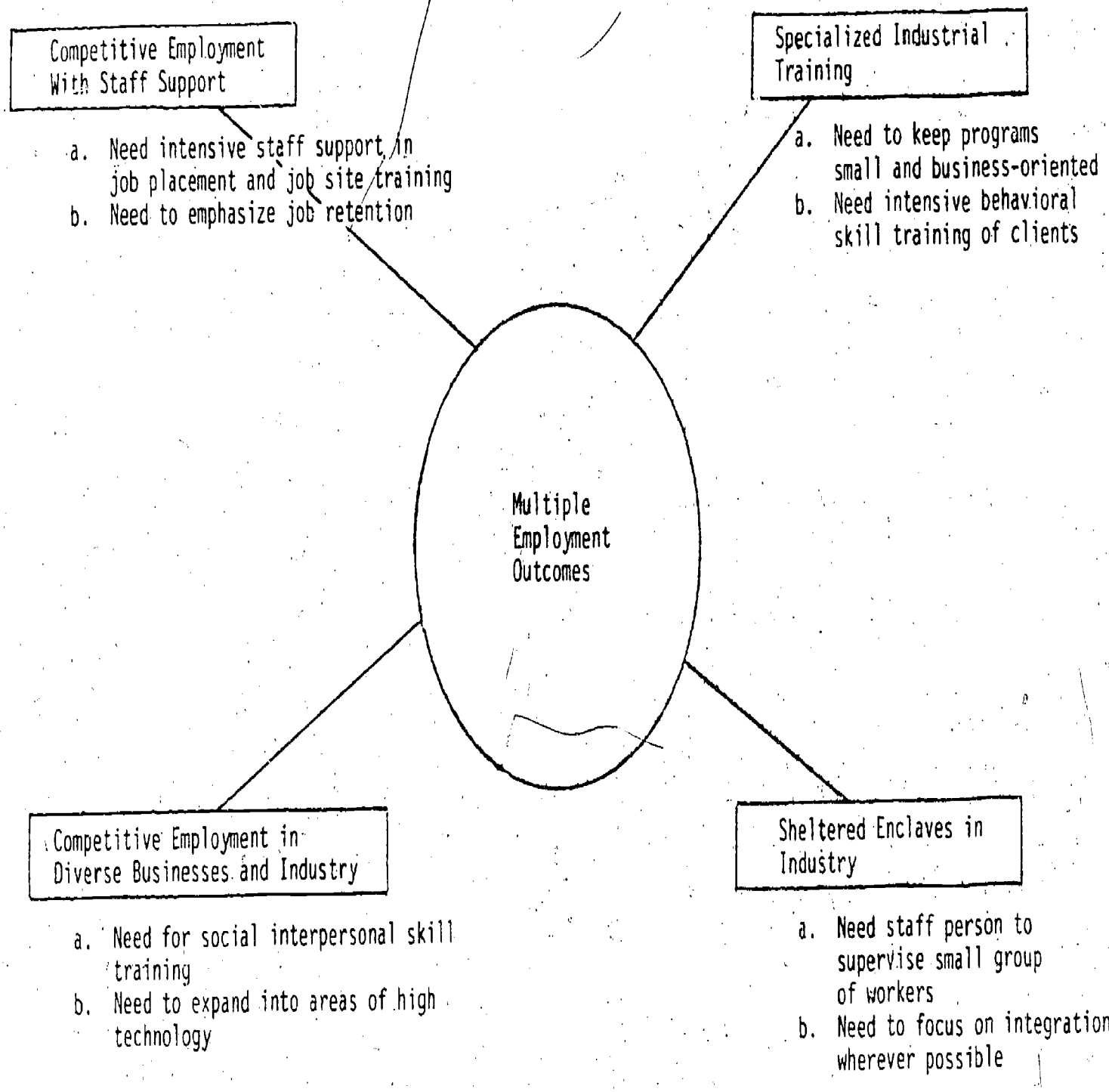


Figure 2

Selected Employment Outcomes for Handicapped Youth



WHAT IS THE EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK FOR YOUNG ADULTS WITH MENTAL RETARDATION AFTER LEAVING SCHOOL?

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Abstract

A total of 300 parents of mentally retarded young adults were interviewed in Virginia. These young adults had left special education school programs between 1979 and 1983. There were 60% of individuals labeled educable mentally retarded, and 40% trainable or severely mentally retarded. The focus of this study was to assess the employment status of these persons. General findings include: a total unemployment rate of 58%; almost three-fourths of those who were employed earned less than $500 per month; most individuals have never received professional job placement services and those who were employed had gotten their job through a family member or friend. It was concluded that school and adult programs need to emphasize much more work in the community based vocational instruction and job placement. Formal transition planning is essential.

What is the Employment Outlook For Young Adults With Mental Retardation After Leaving School

An enormous amount of money is spent each year on special education, vocational education, vocational rehabilitation, and Department of Labor employment programs. For example, the combined federal budgets for special education and vocational rehabilitation exceed two billion dollars annually, with an additional 600 million dollars allotted for vocational education programs. Similarly, laws such as the Comprehensive Employment Training Act and more recently the Joint Partnership Training Act have also addressed, albeit to a lesser degree, the job placement and training of handicapped individuals. A U. S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services policy paper (Will, 1984a) suggests that when state and local resources are included, total expenditures run into the hundreds of millions of dollars per year. Given the immense amount of public money spent on these activities, a fair question to ask is: how are these programs affecting the employment of people with handicaps? In short, are these vocational programs working?

Since the passage of the landmark Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P. L. 94-142) in 1975, very few studies have been conducted that address these questions. In 1978 the Department of Labor reported that 59% of all disabled persons were unemployed. Using survey techniques, Wolfe (1980) found that people with disabilities earn significantly less than nondisabled persons ($2.55 per hour compared to $4.50 per hour). An excellent 1982 study of 450 special education graduates was conducted by Hasazi, Preskill, Gordon, & Collins (1982). They found that almost 50 percent of these individuals were unemployed, with much higher unemployment rates among individuals who were labeled severely handicapped. Similarly, in a recent Maryland study of 1,450 developmentally disabled people (Crites, Smull, & Sachs, 1983) it was reported that only 5 percent of the individuals had regular jobs. The U. S. Commission on Civil Rights (1983)

reported that 50-75 percent of all persons with disabilities were unemployed, results similar to those found in the earlier Department of Labor study.

A comprehensive study in Colorado by Mithaug and Horiuchi (1983) presents the most encouraging picture of adult employment. Sixty-nine percent of recent graduates of education who were surveyed indicated that they were employed at the time of the survey. However, when part-time jobs were removed, the employment rate dropped dramatically to 32 percent, and the wages earned by special education graduates were very low compared to nonhandicapped persons. For example, 43 percent of those employed earned at a rate less than $3.00 per hour. In Nebraska, Schalock and his associates (1984) found that 39 percent of all of the mildly handicapped special education students had no job.

The high rates of unemployment among special education graduates and the urgency of assessing the effectiveness of school-to-work transition efforts (Will, 1984b) prompted a follow-up study of mentally retarded young adults in Virginia. It was clear that both nationally (Elder, 1984) as well as in our own state, Virginia (Noble, 1984), that there are increasingly large numbers of special education students coming out of school requiring transition and specialized employment services. Our purpose in this study was to investigate a population limited to persons with mental retardation who had exited school programs during a selected period of time. Specifically, we were interested in questions related to employment rates, types of employment, type of public school vocational training program, and key factors influencing employment or unemployment. This report should not be construed as reflecting the employment status for all ages of mentally retarded persons in Virginia. The data reported in this paper are part of a larger study which also evaluated independent living and personal lifestyles.

Method

Sample

Mentally retarded young adults were selected as the only category of handicapping condition to assess. Unlike some of the previously reported surveys (Hasazi, et al., 1982), we did not attempt to collect data on every mentally retarded individual who left school. The study attempted to reflect the geographic diversity of the state of Virginia by surveying urban, suburban, and rural areas.

After consulting recent census figures, four different locations in Virginia were selected. The first was a highly urban inner city setting; the second was a large suburban area, the third was rural and suburban, and the final was very rural with a high poverty level. In only the last setting described did more than one school system participate. In this geographical area so few special education students were identified that four other small systems had to be involved. In each setting, all mentally retarded individuals who had left school from 1979 to 1983 were identified.

In each location, a professional was identified to conduct the survey who was familiar with the schools and adult services in the area. This mode of data collection was viewed as a means of reducing the problems associated with mail or telephone surveys. Each interviewer was paid and trained to accurately collect the necessary data. The interviewer was responsible for meeting with appropriate school officials to identify the names, addresses and phone numbers of all mentally retarded individuals to be surveyed. These records were only made available after permission had been received through our communication with the schools. Actual names of participants never appeared on any of the collected surveys since the interviewers were asked to code the surveys and keep the true names in a separate confidential file. A total of 444 names were generated.

Instrument

A 60-item survey was generated. Many of the items contained multiple components, and about 25 items were directly related to employment status. Questions were usually worded in either a forced choice yes-no format or a multiple choice format in order to minimize the length of time required for each interview.

The instrument was developed after reviewing the Hasazi et al. (1982) survey. Some of the items were similar but modified for Virginia. Many of our items, however, were selected in order to determine the individual's current employment status as well as factors that affected this status. The employment section was subdivided into a series of questions for those who reported employment and another series for those who reported no employment.

Field Testing

Once we had constructed the survey, 15 mental retardation professionals in academic and direct service positions in Virginia were consulted to provide input and feedback. After this information had been reviewed and integrated where possible, several special education graduate students were trained and asked to give the survey to parents of mildly, moderately, and severely/profoundly retarded individuals. In this way we could determine what parts of the survey were clumsy, too time consuming, or irrelevant. Survey modifications were again made based on this information.

Interviewers

The four interviewers were the key to the success of the study. These individuals were all women with Bachelors or Masters degrees in the human services and with job titles of special education teacher, vocational placement specialist, or visiting teacher. They had lived and worked in their respective areas for at least five consecutive years.

All interviewers were brought to our central location for six hours and trained to conduct the survey. This procedure was done to minimize variations in how the interviews were conducted and to maximize uniformity of presentation. Each interview was expected to require 30-45 minutes to complete. Parents were typically expected to be respondents, although the mentally retarded individuals were encouraged to be available as well. The interviewers were paid in two installments, when 50 percent of the interviews were completed and then at the end of the study. A total of five months was anticipated for completion of the interviews (December, 1983 - May, 1984).

Interviewers were monitored on a weekly basis. A graduate assistant called each interviewer once a week at a predetermined time to assess whether the previously agreed upon number of interviews had been completed. Periodically the completed surveys were mailed to us for on-going coding and storage of information. At the end of the study, interviewers were given feedback on what the results in their location seemed to show.

Results

A total of exactly 300 individuals were contacted and responded to the survey. Respondents were fairly evenly distributed among urban (30 percent), suburban (31 percent) and rural-suburban (38 percent residents).

Demographic Information

Table 1 contains a breakdown of selected demographic data which profile key aspects of the subject pool. Two-thirds of the respondents were the mothers of the individuals surveyed. Fifty seven percent of the individuals surveyed were males, and the sample contained an equal distribution of Blacks and Caucasians. Subjects ranged in age from 17-24 (mean age = 21), with 53 percent of the sample being 21 years of age or younger. Sixty percent of the persons were labeled

mildly mentally retarded and 40 percent had been served in programs for students labeled moderately or severely/profoundly mentally retarded.

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Insert Table 1 About Here
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Employment and Level of Income

Table 2 indicates that of 300 total respondents, 125 persons reported some form of employment (full time regular job, part-time regular job, or sheltered workshop) at the time of the interview for a 41.6 percent total employment rate. However, when part-time employment (seven percent) and sheltered employment (six percent) are removed this level drops to a 31 percent employment rate. Most of the individuals who reported employment were engaged in entry level service occupations. It should also be noted that a total of 14 out of 116 (12 percent) of the moderately and severely mentally retarded persons surveyed were competitively employed. Furthermore, of the 125 employed individuals, 25 percent report earnings between $51-$200; 48 percent report earnings of $201-$500 per month; and 17 percent report earnings between $501-$700 per month. Respondents were also asked how much total money the individual had earned since leaving school. Sixty-three percent indicated that between $1000-$4000 has been earned and 14 percent have earned between $4000-$6000. Over 20 percent had earned less than $1000 in total. Table 3 reports the type of jobs being performed.

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Insert Table 2 & 3 About Here
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Fringe Benefits

Fringe benefits were divided into five categories. Seventy percent of all those employed do not receive sick leave benefits; similarly about two-thirds receive no vacation benefits. Almost 70 percent do not have insurance benefits while 97 percent have no profit sharing plan. Sixteen percent report that they do

receive free meals as a benefit.

Transportation to Job

Of those graduates employed, less than half are dependent on others for transportation to and from their job, with 33 percent driven to work by a parent or friend and nine percent riding a facility bus. However, 55 percent report independently transporting themselves to and from work, with 29 percent driving themselves, having a parent or friend drive them to work, and nine percent riding a facility bus. Other modes of transportation included use of a carpool, walking, or a bicycle.

Job Characteristics and Assistance in Finding Job

Over 83 percent of all those individuals employed expressed being happy or satisfied with their employment. Seventeen percent indicated that they were bored or were planning on quitting. In Table 4 there is a description of how those who were employed found their jobs. Friends, parents, relatives, and individual job searching account for well over 65 percent of how people located jobs. Rehabilitation counselors were reported helpful in only 11 percent of the cases.

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Insert Table 4 About Here
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Nature of Rehabilitation and Mental Retardation Services Available

Of the total number of respondents, 75.7 percent say they have never received any services from a local rehabilitation counselor. Twenty-two percent received services occasionally and only two percent reported receiving service frequently. Similarly, 83 percent of all respondents could not name any counselor assigned to them or in their area. Eighty four percent of the respondents indicate that they have never received any local mental retardation services, with 11 percent receiving day program services and 3.7 percent receiving job placement assistance. Over 80 percent report they have never utilized the services of the Virginia

Employment Commission.

Reasons for Job Separation

Those respondents who had previously been employed were asked why they had stopped working. A total of 8.4 percent of these individuals indicated that they had problems with their supervisor or coworker while another 7.4 percent reported they disliked their work. Some individuals, or 4.7 percent, quit because their jobs were abolished. A total of 4.4 percent indicate that they were told their work rate was too slow and another 4.1 percent lost transportation to and from the job. Less than one percent quit work because of social security payment concerns.

Nature of School Vocational Program

A total of 69 percent of the respondents indicated that they had received at some point in their school program vocational training experiences which took place off school grounds and for which no pay was received; eight percent had participated in the former CETA program. Almost 10 percent have never received any vocational services. The questionnaire did not clearly discriminate between vocational services delivered by vocational educators versus special educators but anecdotally interviewers reported that very few of the respondents indicated formal vocational education participation.

Discussion

The results of this study of the employment status of young adults with mental retardation are not encouraging, at least in the four geographical areas that were surveyed in Virginia. The unemployment rate was found to be almost 60 percent, and if part time and sheltered employment are omitted, this percentage accelerates to over 70 percent. These figures are highly consistent with national studies and reports from other states. Furthermore, those who are employed tend to earn very little money, with almost three out of every four earning less than

$500 per month. These results are particularly discouraging, however, when the age of the individuals surveyed is considered. These individuals are right out of school, and if they cannot find employment fairly quickly, then they are often unable to participate in any type of structured employment.

Another finding which is especially significant is that rehabilitation, mental retardation, and state employment services are not being accessed by these students as they leave school. One might almost speculate that there is no communication whatsoever between school personnel and the adult service agencies critical to successful transition from school to adulthood. Those individuals who were unemployed at the time of the study suggest they don't know of any available jobs or that there is no one to help them find a job or provide job training. Interestingly, 83 percent of the people who are working indicate they are quite happy being employed.

It is also notable that friends (25 percent), parents (17 percent), and individuals themselves (26 percent) account for over two-thirds of the ways initial jobs were located. If these data are accurate, then two things become apparent. One, the money invested in counseling and other services are not being used or are ineffective. The second conclusion which may be drawn is that parents need to be more involved in planning the process, given the significant influence they appear to have on obtaining employment. Similarly, social friendships and independent job-seeking practice are much more important in school programs than one might believe.

There are, unquestionably, methodological limitations which reduce the generalizability of this study. The lack of a comprehensive sample, the necessity of using parental respondents in most instances, and the fact that data were collected in only one state prohibits widespread conclusions from being drawn. On the other hand, the sample size of 300 was fairly large, and the use of on-site

interviewers appeared to increase the accuracy of the data.

Notwithstanding the possible drawbacks in the design of this study, it is probably safe to conclude the following:

1. The unemployment rate of recently graduated mentally retarded persons in many parts of Virginia is very high, especially in view of the general unemployment rate of about five percent within the state. Also wages earned were very poor. In addition, fringe benefits limited to less than 30 percent of those employed.
2. The intellectual level of the graduates was not as big a factor in employment level as one might think. A total of 43 percent of those individuals labeled mildly mentally retarded were unemployed as compared to 78 percent of those labeled moderately or severely mentally retarded.
3. The network of families and friends play a major role in job location for retarded persons. This information underscores the necessity for mental retardation, school and rehabilitative services to do a much better job of working with families and retarded clients in the placement process. Clearly the services available to special education graduates are not being fully accessed, or if they are, are not being very effective. The use of informed job networks has also been reported in the Vermont study (Hasazi, et al, 1982).

What makes these findings most unfortunate is that there is now over 15 years of professional literature (Bellamy, Close, & Peterson, 1976; Gold, 1972; Melia, 1984; Rusch, in press; Wehman, 1981; Wehman, Hill, Goodall, Cleveland, Brooke, and Pentecost, 1982) that strongly suggests that individuals with mental retardation are capable workers. The sizable discrepancy between research and practice

identified in this paper as well as other studies suggests that schools and and adult service agencies need to do a much better job of facilitating the transition from school to work. The current study only examined those individuals with mental retardation. When the sample is broadened to include all disabilities, transition problems will become even more complex.

It seems to us that all of the special education program efforts and dollars expended will be for naught if credible employment options cannot be obtained. It is time for special education and rehabilitation programs to move from merely providing services and to improve the quality of services for many more traditionally unserved persons. We need to look much more closely at how many professionals such as rehabilitation counselors and vocational educators currently function in the transition process. It may well be that many of these individuals will need to dramatically alter their current job roles and play a more active part in job placement activity. It is questionable whether the high level of unemployment which currently exists will be reduced until this happens.

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Table 1

Summary of Demographic Data

	[1]
Respondent:	67% Mothers 12% Fathers 7% Clients
Sex:	57.3% Male 42.7% Female
Age:	21%: 17-20 years old 12%: 20 years old 20%: 21 years old 17%: 22 years old 15%: 23 years old 15%: 24 years old
Race:	49% Black 49% Caucasion
Home Location:	38% - Rural/Suburban 30% - Urban 31% - Suburban
Type of School Program:	60% - Educable Mental Retardation Classes in Regular School 24% - Trainable or Severe/Profound Mental Retardation Classes in Regular School 16% - Trainable or Severe/Profound Retardation in Special School

[1] Total N=300

Table 2

Employment Status
N=300

Unemployed	58.4%
Full-Time Competitive Employment	28.6%
Part-Time Competitive Employment	7.0%
Sheltered Employment	6.0%
Unemployment of Mildly Retarded Persons	43%
Unemployment of Moderately, Severely and Profoundly Retarded Persons	78%

Table 3

Nature of Employment (N=125)

Job Title	Frequency	Percent
Janitor	26	20.8
Food Service	24	19.2
Sheltered Workshop	17	13.6
Farm Worker	9	7.2
Factory Worker	6	4.8
Lumberyard Worker	4	3.2
Construction	4	3.2
Office Worker	3	2.4
Bagger in Grocery Store	3	2.4
Stockroom Aide	2	1.6
Driver	2	1.6
Yard Helper	2	1.6
Domestic Help	2	1.6
Plumber	1	.8
Junkyard Worker	1	.8
Loader On Dock	1	.8
Stocker in Grocery Store	1	.8
Skilled Labor	1	.8
Dishwasher	1	.8
Logger	1	.8
Hospital Cleaning	1	.8
Grounds Maintenance	1	.8
Messenger in Office	1	.8
Greenhouse Worker	1	.8
Busboy	1	.8
Child Care Aide	1	.8

Table 4

Assistance in Finding Job N=125

Mode of Assistance	Percent
Independently - by oneself	25.8
Friend	25.0
Parent	16.9
School Guidance Counselor	12.1
Rehabilitation Counselor	11.3
Local Community Program	6.5
Relative	1.6
Virginia Employment Commission	.8

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TOWARD THE EMPLOYABILITY OF SEVERELY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to describe how special education teachers and other educational personnel can improve the employment prospects of children and youth with severe handicaps. Specifically, this article provides instructional guidelines and curriculum suggestions for students at the elementary age level, the intermediate age level and secondary age. A statement and rationale for early vocational intervention is also made with the emphasis being on community-based vocational instruction.

Toward the Employability of Severely Handicapped Children and Youth

With an unemployment rate among handicapped individuals at 59% (Whitehead, 1979), and less than poverty-level wages of $414 per year common for many mentally retarded sheltered workshop employees (Department of Labor, 1977), the need for meaningful vocational programs for the severely handicapped is greater than ever. In fact, a recent report by the Social Security Administration (1982) indicated that a substantial amount of the Supplemental Social Security Income payments go specifically to unemployed mentally retarded workers. Moderately, severely, and multihandicapped individuals are usually included among their numbers. The amount of these transfer payments over the adult lifetime of an unemployed severely handicapped individual can be terribly expensive (Hill, & Wehman in press; Schneider, Rusch, Henderson, & Geske, 1981).

Two major observations emerge from a review of the results of several successful job placement programs which served mildly, moderately, and severely handicapped persons (Greenspan & Schoultz, 1981; Rusch, in press; Sowers, Connis, & Thompson, 1979; Wehman, 1981; Wehman, Hill, Goodall, Pentecost, Cleveland, & Brooke, 1982).

First, vocational programs for the severely handicapped begin too late in the child's school period. Most programs begin when the student is 14, 15, or 16 years old. In some cases, this leaves less than four years for students with numerous severe handicaps to learn a large number of general and specific work skills. This observation is echoed in a report by the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped and Missouri Governor's Committee on Employment of Handicapped (1982).

Second, most school-based vocational programs (part-time or full-time) do not heavily emphasize employment or job placement as a culmination of vocational

training experiences. It is usually expected that adult programs will take up this responsibility. Nevertheless, the community service system of adult day programs and vocational rehabilitation for many reasons are unable to follow through adequately on job placement and follow-up (e.g., Bellamy, Sheehan, Horner, & Boles, 1980).

Thus we have been faced more often than not with students who graduate with several years of vocational training which is often incomplete, and with no assistance provided in job placement. This set of events contributes to maintain high unemployment of handicapped individuals. This article, therefore, proposes to discuss guidelines and suggestions for providing employment-oriented vocational education experiences for severely handicapped students throughout the school-age period.

Time Commitment to Vocational Programs

Decisions must be made as to how much time in a busy school day will be devoted to vocational education experiences. As a general rule of thumb the older the student, the more time may be spent in vocational instruction. For example, at the elementary level less than one hour might be spent on vocational and career awareness experiences. At the middle school level there might be a gradual increase from one to two hours, building up to almost 50% of the day by the time the student is 17 years old. In the final years of school, vocational training and placement can absorb 80% to 90% of the student's day. Lynch (1982, p. 83) essentially made a similar point by emphasizing the need for reduced academic work as the student grows older.

It should be noted, however, that many community, social, and language skills can be taught very nicely in the context of vocational settings. Community skills such as money management, time management, and travel training take on meaning when associated with a real job. Similarly, social interaction greeting skills,

picture or gestural communication, and the ability to follow multiple instructions are all viable training targets which have high utility in a job.

The guidelines described above are estimates. Every student's situation will vary depending on such factors as skill level, classroom arrangements, and parent perceptions. The balance of this paper offers suggestions for providing vocational education at different age levels for severely handicapped students.

Elementary Level

The teacher of primary age severely handicapped children has a responsibility to focus part of the educational program on career and vocationally related activities. This concentration includes not only work with students but also specific interactions with parents and vocational experts within the school. Four guidelines for the elementary level teacher are briefly described below.

Let students sample different types of jobs to which they are likely to have access when they become older. Cleaning tables, emptying trash, washing blackboards, or taking messages to the office are good ways of improving career awareness. Professions such as doctor, lawyer, or nurse are impractical and should have less exposure, since this may erroneously distort the perceptions of some students. A major value of this exercise is that students, their parents, and educational personnel can evaluate strengths, weaknesses, and interests in relation to different jobs and help posture the child for intense work in a more concentrated career cluster as he or she grows older.

Introduce such concepts as work, money, and employer relationships into the classroom. Students can run errands, empty trash, clean blackboards, and do other jobs not so much for the purpose of specific skill development as for acquiring the general work skills which transcend all types of jobs. The lack of just such broad work skills frequently leads to the termination of employed handicapped workers (Kochany & Keller, 1981).

The teacher needs to talk with the child's parents about the concept of work and its importance. Materials can be shared with parents which emphasize the employment potential of handicapped youth and adults. Interested parents should be encouraged to visit successful work programs both at school and at local adult day programs.

Finally, elementary teachers need to visit senior level and adult programs to carefully observe the types of skills which are most important to the vocational success of severely handicapped students. Communication among teachers at these different levels must take place in order for the elementary level teacher to become sensitive to the curriculum changes which must be put in place in the earlier years. A list of sample prevocational behaviors is provided by Lynch (1982, p. 2) for the elementary through secondary years.

Middle School Level

Once a severely handicapped child reaches 10 or 11 years of age, three additional areas of vocational education should be emphasized, along with continued communication with parents and senior level programs. Teachers at the middle school level must be aware that the student is a "product" whose later progress in vocational placements is highly dependent on the quality of the program provided at the middle school level.

First, more attention and time must be given to developing general work habits such as neat appearance, being on task at the work station, and responding appropriately to supervisor criticism. These skills were introduced at the primary age level but need to be expanded and practiced more often. General work habits are best taught in the context of specific vocational skills and with systematic instructional techniques (Wehman & Pentecost, 1983; Wehman & McLaughlin, 1980). Related vocational behaviors can also be taught and reinforced in a variety of other curriculum areas and by staff other than teachers. Rusch

and Schutz (1982) developed an excellent assessment tool to evaluate this progress.

A focus on learning specific vocational skills which will lead to employability of a marketable trade (e.g., housekeeping) should be emphasized as well. The essential point is that teachers must teach students how to become proficient at a variety of jobs which, depending on the local job market, might include entry level skills in farming, clerical, food service, housekeeping or custodial, or sheltered work such as assembly and sorting. Instructional techniques such as task analysis, forward or backward chaining, shaping, and reinforcement are commonly used techniques to facilitate these skills (Bellamy, Horner, & Inman, 1979; Wehman & McLaughlin, 1980). The purpose is to provide students with a specific repertoire of skills which senior level teachers then build upon.

Toward the latter stages of the intermediate level period, teachers should assist students in identifying a vocational track(s) which can be emphasized in the senior level. For example, a profoundly retarded 13-year old might be advised to spend a significant portion of time learning sheltered work skills which correspond to the requirements of local sheltered facilities. On the other hand, a severely retarded trainable level youth might focus more time on janitorial skills, assuming that the local job market experiences regular turnover in maintenance-related positions.

Secondary Level

It is at this age level that one can truly assess the success or failure of the vocational experiences provided in the earlier years. More time should be spent on vocational education at the secondary level. At least five additional areas need to be emphasized, as well as continued reinforcement of the activities and suggestions already mentioned. These five areas include:

1. Focus on increasing or improving production rates. The speed at which students work in sheltered workshops or competitive employment situations will directly affect their employability and attractiveness to potential employers. Bellamy, Horner, and Inman (1979) described in detail strategies for accelerating production rates.

2. Focus on improving the quality of job performance. The accuracy and care with which the job is completed will influence the likelihood of being retained on a job, assuming, of course, that work proficiency, work speed, and general work skills are adequate. The quality objectives will be partially affected by the employer's or industry's standards of acceptance. Improving quality of work performance is best accomplished by reinforcing students for progressively fewer errors and helping to arrange a work environment which reduces the likelihood of failure.

3. Focus on building up the student's endurance and stamina. Increasing the number of work hours for the secondary level student over a period of weeks will go a long way toward promoting improved employability in adulthood. During the performance of workshop tasks, the student should be encouraged to stand rather then sit all the time. Nonsheltered employment training should require the student to complete a series of tasks within a job without stopping for more than a brief period.

4. Focus on providing vocational experiences in natural or real life environments. All too often, secondary level students receive vocational (and other educational) services in highly protected classroom and center environments. While it may be administratively understandable, this service delivery pattern leads to the student's inability to generalize vocational skills learned at the school or to relate to and interact with nonhandicapped individuals in the natural work place. These critical deficits are usually best overcome by providing some

training in natural work environments outside the classroom (Wehman & Hill, 1982) and/or by actually placing the student into a part-time or full-time job and then providing job-site training in a supported work model (Kraus & MacEachron, 1982; Wehman, 1981).

5. When placement is not possible, do not let students graduate without a transition plan into an adult vocational services program which will provide necessary followthrough. A transition plan should list options available for the student in the community, identify an advocate (i.e., rehabilitation counselor or case manager), and describe strategies for ensuring a smooth change from school to adult-based programs (Wilcox & Bellamy, 1982).

The Role of Related Services Personnel

Staff in the related services can also play an important role in improving the employability of severely handicapped youth. For example, communication specialists can emphasize work-related content in language training. Language objectives should reflect competencies required for success in senior level and adult vocational programs. In many cases it will be necessary to create portable and efficient means of manual communication; that is, ways of minimizing reliance on verbal skills.

Motor specialists such as occupational therapists, perceptual-motor experts, and adaptive physical education personnel can also help by focusing on activities which lead to strength, stamina, and endurance. Fine motor content should be selected which is, as much as possible, vocationally functional and directly related to job proficiency.

The Role of Administrative Personnel

Few of these activities and guidelines can be adequately implemented without the support of appropriate central office staff, the building principal, and often the assistant principal. The influence of administrators in the following areas

is essential to implementation of a vocational program across all school ages:

1. Provide necessary space, supplies, and equipment for training.
2. Provide faculty with necessary technical assistance and exposure to successful vocational models for severely handicapped students.
3. Provide necessary support for helping faculty change their roles so as to spend more time on community-based vocational instruction and placement.
4. Provide administrative support with professionals within the school system and community at large to facilitate training and placement.
5. Help faculty keep a careful focus on the general objectives for each class level.
6. Help faculty counsel parents on accepting work as a viable goal for the child.
7. Provide for insurance and other liability-related matters where necessary.
8. Help faculty make transportation arrangements.

The administrative tone set in the school will affect the success of the program. Only the administrators can evaluate the entire program, including the cross-section of vocational activities, the amount of time being devoted to these activities, and overall teacher/parent reaction. A commitment to employment-oriented vocational experiences must be operative in order to implement and maintain a viable program.

Summary

Longitudinal programming from 5 to 21 years of age is a major theme of an employment oriented approach to vocational education for severely handicapped students. Teachers at each subsequent age level are dependent on the efforts of the previous teachers if the student is to be, in fact, marketable or employable in the sheltered or nonsheltered business community.

Educators of the severely handicapped must expend much greater effort to learn how local businesses function and the criteria they consider crucial for hiring and retention. Only when we focus more on identifying the labor force

needs of business and industry and subsequently translate these needs into curricula at all age levels will we begin to substantially improve the employability of many more severely handicapped individuals.

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COMMUNITY INTEGRATION OF YOUNG ADULTS WITH MENTAL RETARDATION: TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO ADULTHOOD

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Abstract

The present study assessed the degree of community integration of 300 young adults in Virginia who have participated in special education programs for students labeled mentally retarded. Surveys were administered by trained interviewers on variables related to basic self-care, home management, community usage, use of free time, recreational/leisure activities, and self-satisfaction. Results indicated that the individuals surveyed were generally satisfied with their present situation, and most displayed some degree of competence in the area of independent living skills. Implications of the results and the necessity for future research are briefly discussed.

Community Integration of Young Adults With Mental Retardation: Transition from School to Adulthood

Assessing the degree of community integration of persons with mental retardation living in local communities is a difficult and complex task (Lakin, Bruininks, & Sigford, 1981). Many previous studies have taken a limited view of successful integration, considering only whether or not an individual is able to remain in the community and not focusing on factors that indicate the quality of a person's life. Despite a shortage of reliable information, it is obvious that living in the community with relatives or in an alternative living arrangement does not guarantee a person with mental retardation a normal lifestyle (Bercovici, 1981). An individual's independent living and social activities should both be considered when evaluating the total community integration of persons with mental retardation.

Independent living skills refer to those activities that decrease an individual's dependence upon other people (e.g., grooming, cooking, and home management skills) as well as activities that allow the individual to use generic community services (e.g., mobility and shopping skills) (Vogelsberg, Williams, & Bellamy, 1982). Independent living skills identified as critical for successful community integration have included basic self-care, home management, independent mobility and use of community facilities (Heal, Sigelman, & Switzky, 1978; Schalock, Harper, & Carver, 1981). Despite the importance of these skills, relatively little data presently exist that document the effectiveness of current attempts to equip individuals with mental retardation with independent living skills (Schalock, 1983).

It is obvious that there is a vast difference between living in a community and being socially integrated into that community. Unfortunately, many individuals with mental retardation are living in local community settings, yet

are socially isolated within their homes and excluded from participation in the mainstream of community life (Bercovici, 1981). Interaction with other community members and recreational activities should be examined to determine the social integration of persons with mental retardation.

The importance of interpersonal relationships in the community integration of persons with mental retardation has been widely explored (Reiter & Levi, 1980; Schalock, Harper, & Genung, 1981). In a comparison with mildly and moderately mentally retarded individuals, Landesman-Dwyer and Sulzbacher (1981) found that persons with severe handicaps spent more idle time within their residence, interacted less with others, and spent much less time outside the residence. When individuals leave the residence, they rarely do so unaccompanied (Scheerenberger & Felsenthal, 1977). These findings corroborate the results of earlier studies (Baker, Seltzer, & Seltzer, 1977; Gollay, Freedman, Wyngaarden, & Kurtz, 1978) which found that individuals living in community residential facilities generally did not develop friendships outside the facility, did not visit others in the community, and rarely dated.

Engaging in active, community-based recreation activities is another powerful indicator of social integration. Current evidence (Salzberg & Langford, 1981; Wehman, Schleien, & Kiernan, 1980) indicates that many individuals spend leisure time inside their homes rather than participating in community-oriented recreation/leisure activities. Gollay and her colleagues (1978) found that individuals engaged primarily in passive recreation activities and that group activities (clubs or organizations) were selected least often. Community recreation activities almost always occurred in programs designed exclusively for disabled individuals.

Many professionals currently recommend deriving the content of community integration training programs from an empirical analysis of the domestic,

community, and recreational skills required for success in post-school environments (Snell, 1983; Wilcox & Bellamy, 1982). At the same time, little information presently exists to document the independent living and social activities of individuals who have recently left public school special education programs for persons with mental retardation. The purpose of this study was to investigate the community integration of a group of individuals with mental retardation who had left public school programs during a selected period of time. Specific factors to be investigated included basic self-care, home management, and community usage skills, use of free time and recreational/leisure activities, and self-satisfaction. The data presented are a part of a larger study which also investigated the vocational adjustment of persons with mental retardation.

Method

Sample

Young adults who have been served in public school special education programs for individuals labeled mildly, moderately, or severely mentally retarded were selected for investigation. Survey participants were individuals from four communities in Virginia who had left school from 1979 through 1983. The communities surveyed included a highly urban inner city setting, a large suburban area, a rural/suburban area, and a very rural area. This final area revealed so few special education students that four small school systems were included for investigation.

A professional in each of the four locations who was familiar with the schools and adult services in the area was identified to conduct survey interviews. Each professional was trained and paid to collect data derived from a 60-item structured interview. Through communication with the participating school districts a list of 444 individuals was generated who had recently exited special education programs for students with mental retardation. Actual names of

participants never appeared on any of the collected surveys.

Instrument

A 60-item survey was generated which contained 35 items addressing independent living and social integration activities. Questions were worded in either a forced choice yes-no format or a multiple choice format in order to facilitate the length of time required for each interview. The items included were intended to determine the domestic, community, recreational, and social activities in which an individual participated. The focus of the items was not on whether the individual possessed the ability to perform the activities included in the survey, but rather if the individual engaged in these activities as a part of his or her regular routine.

Field-Testing

Once the survey was constructed, 15 mental retardation professionals in academic and direct service circles in Virginia were consulted to provide input and feedback. Once this information had been gleaned and integrated where possible, several mental retardation graduate students were trained and asked to give the survey to parents of individuals with mild, moderate, and severe mental retardation. Survey modifications were again made from this information.

Interviews

All four interviewers held Bachelors or Masters degrees in the human services and were working as special education teachers, vocational placement specialists, or visiting teachers. All had lived and worked in their respective areas for at least five consecutive years. The interviewers were brought to a central location for six hours of training. After training, interviewers completed the surveys between December, 1983 and May, 1984.

Results

A total of exactly 300 individuals were contacted and responded to the

survey. This total was divided into 30 percent urban, 31 percent suburban, and 38 percent rural/suburban residents. At the time of the interviews 86.4 percent of the individuals surveyed lived at home with their natural family, and 7.2 percent lived independently. Less than two percent lived in any type of community-based alternative living arrangement.

Table 1 contains a breakdown of selected demographic data that profile key features of the group of individuals surveyed. As can be seen, two-thirds of the respondents were mothers. Males accounted for 57.3 percent of the individuals surveyed, and Blacks and Caucasians each comprised 49 percent of the sample. Individuals ranged in age from 17-24, with 37 percent being either 21 or 22 years of age. Sixty percent of the individuals had received services in public school classes for students with mild mental retardation and 40 percent in regular or special school classes for students with moderate and severe mental retardation.

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Independent Living

Table 2 summarizes the independent living activities of the entire sample. Over 90 percent of the individuals independently completed all basic self-care tasks (dressing, eating, toileting, bathing, and grooming). A majority of individuals participated in a variety of home management activities. Of those surveyed, 74.6 percent participated in cooking meals and/or snacks for themselves, 43.1 percent did their laundry, 23.8 percent sewed or mended their clothes, 79.9 cleaned their rooms, and 67.6 percent completed assigned household chores.

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Participants displayed some degree of independent mobility and usage of community facilities. Seventy-five percent of those surveyed walked about their

communities, 39 percent rode bicycles, 20.3 percent drove a car, and 25 percent used public transportation. Slightly more than half (51.8 percent) of the individuals bought clothes for themselves. Retail stores were frequented by 65.6 percent of the individuals, 46.5 percent utilized restaurants, 27.9 percent used the post office, and 25.4 percent used a bank. Over three-fourths of those surveyed used money to make purchases independently. Only 51.8 percent reported making change on their own. Banking activities were displayed by a smaller number of persons, with 15.4 percent writing checks, 10.4 percent balancing checkbooks, and 17.1 percent possessing savings accounts.

Social Integration

A majority of the social activities and interpersonal relationshps reported by the respondents focused on passively oriented activities conducted within their own homes. As indicated in Table 3, a majority of individuals (59.7 percent) preferred spending free time with their families, 22.3 percent with friends, and 3.3 percent alone. One of every five individuals (20.3 percent) spent time only with their families. However, 59.7 percent of the individuals reported spending the vast majority of their free time with persons with no identified disabilities. A number of individuals reported some amount of time (more than one hour per week) engaging in social activities outside their homes, with 68.8 percent spending time in homes of friends, 27.6 percent in outdoor recreation facilities, and 28.9 percent in indoor recreation activities.

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The individuals surveyed participated in a wide variety of recreational activities. Nearly all individuals (92.2 percent) reported watching television regularly, 89.9 percent listening to records and tapes, 26.8 percent playing card games, 18.8 percent playing table games, 8.4 percent making crafts, and 15.4

percent playing videogames. In contrast, considerably fewer individuals participated in sports-related activities. Less than a fourth of all those surveyed participated in activities such as jogging, swimming, cycling, bowling, basketball, or football. A greater number of individuals reported engaging in more passively oriented leisure activities, with 38.6 percent attending sporting events and 43.6 percent attending movies regularly. The area of recreational activities least frequently reported by respondents was that of membership and participation in social organizations or clubs. Only 18.2 percent reported participating in church activities such as chorus or clubs, and no more than three percent of the individuals participated in a YMCA/YWCA scouting program or attended an adult education or exercise class.

The survey also attempted to assess the individuals' current satisfaction with their present situation and identify the significant problems faced by survey participants. Data summarizing these results are contained in Table 4. Almost three-fourths of the individuals were reported as being very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their lives. Only 13.9 percent were reported being somewhat dissatisfied and 3.4 percent very dissatisfied with their lives. A wide variety of problems were reported by the respondents. The most frequently reported problems included lack of work skills (29.3 percent of the individuals), transportation problems (23.9 percent), and lack of money (22.2 percent). Other less frequently cited problems included caring for children (17 percent), lack of leisure activities (16.1 percent), making friends (13.1 percent), inappropriate behavior (12.1 percent) and health problems (10.1 percent).

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Discussion

The results of this study present a mixed picture of the community

integration of young adults who have recently exited from special education programs for persons with mental retardation. The data presented should not be construed as reflecting the status of all adults with mental retardation in Virginia. The lack of a comprehensive, representative sample, the reliance upon parental respondents, and the collection of data within only four specific locations prevents generalized conclusions from being drawn. Results obtained are undoubtably affected by the training provided in public school programs and the level of adult services available in the participating communities. However, the sample size of 300 is relatively large, and the use of trained interviewers appeared to increase the reliability of the data. Given the drawbacks in study design, a few significant trends emerged which may provide a basis for future investigations.

1. Almost all of the individuals investigated demonstrated some degree of competence in independent living skills. Nearly all possess basic self-care skills, most participate in home management activities, and many possess some degree of independent mobility within their local community. Some individuals make significant use of community facilities, although environments such as restaurants, post offices and banks are frequented by a relatively small number of individuals.

2. The individuals' participation in social activities reflected an emphasis on passively oriented activities conducted within their own homes. Well over half the individuals studied spend the vast majority of their free time with family members and 20 percent interact exclusively with members of their own family. The majority of recreational interests cited by respondents were passive, home-based activities. Relatively few individuals indicated participation in active, sports-related activities, and very few participated in any type of social organization or club.

3. Despite the lack of social interaction with other members of the

community, the individuals surveyed appear quite satisfied with their current lifestyle. Only 17 percent of the individuals expressed any degree of dissatisfaction with their current situation. However, a sizeable number of individuals reported significant problems which presently inhibit their community integration. Lack of work skills, transportation, and lack of money were cited as problems by more than 20 percent of those surveyed.

The design and implementation of effective community integration training programs for persons with mental retardation presents a challenge to professionals in public schools and adult service programs. Successful community integration requires individuals to be independent within their homes and communities and to be socially integrated into all facets of community life. Although the majority of individuals surveyed engage in independent living activities and appear satisfied with their lives, many continue to be socially isolated in their homes and fail to engage in active, structured recreational or social activities. Further investigation is needed to determine the effects of factors such as type of school program, employment status, and level of retardation on community integration. Complete and accurate information on each of these factors is required to enable professionals to design training programs that maximize the community integration of individuals with mental retardation.

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Table 1

Summary of Demographic Data

Respondent:[1]	67% mothers / 12% fathers / 7% clients
Sex:	57.3% male / 42.7% female
Age	21% - 17-19 yrs. old / 17% - 22 yrs. old 12% - 20 yrs. old / 15% - 23 yrs. old 20% - 21 yrs. old
Race:	49% Black / 49% Caucasion
Home Location:	38% - Rural/Suburban 30% - Urban 31% - Suburban
Type of School Program:	60% - Mild Mental Retardation Classes in Regular School 24% - Trainable or Severe/Profound Mental Retardation Classes in Regular School 16% - Moderate or Severe/Profound Retardation in Special School
Employment Status:	29% - Full-time employed 14% - Part-time employed 57% - Unemployed
Residence:	86.4% - Natural Family 7.8% - Independent Residence 2.0% - Alternative Living Arrangement 3.8% - Other

[1] Total N=300

Table 2

Summary of Independent Living Activities

Activity Area	Percentage of Individuals Engaging in the Activity
Independent Living	
Basic Self Care:	93% Independent Dressing
	97.3% Independent Eating
	95.7% Independent Toileting
	91.7% Independent Bathing/Grooming
Home Management:	74.6% Preparing meals/snacks
	43.1% Do their own laundry
	23.8% Sew or mend clothes
	79.9% Clean own room
	67.6% Complete household chores
Mobility:	75% Walk about community
	39% Ride bicycle
	20.3% Drive a car
	25.9% Use public transportation
Utilize Community Facilities:	65.6% Retail stores
	46.3% Restaurants
	27.9% Post Offices
	25.4% Banks
Money Usage:	77.5% Use money to make purchases
	51.8% Make change
	15.4% Write checks
	17.1% Savings account
	10.4% Balance checkbook

Table 3

Summary of Social Integration Activities

Activity Area	Percentage of Individuals Engaging in the Activity
Social Integration	
Individuals with whom free time is most frequently spent:	59.7% Family
	22.3% Friends
	3.3% Alone
	1.0% In Public
Social activities outside the home:	68% In homes of friends
	27.6% Outdoor recreation activities
	28.9% Indoor recreation activities
Recreation Activities:	92.2% Watch television
	89.9% Listen to records or tapes
	26.8% Play card games
	18.8% Play table games
	8.4% Make crafts
	15.4% Play videogames
Sports:	14.1% Jogging
	22.8% Swimming
	23.2% Cycling
	18.9% Bowling
	6.4% Basketball
	2.7% Football
Events Attended Regularly:	38.6% Sports events
	12.4% Concerts and plays
	43.6% Movies
	14.8% Fairs and festivals
	3.7% Dances
Social Organizations and Clubs:	18.2% Church-related activities
	17% YMCA/YWCA
	2.4% Scouting
	2.3% Exercise Class
	3.0% Adult Education Class

Table 4

Summary of Personal Satisfaction With Present Situation

Area	Percentage of Individuals
Satisfaction with Present Situation:	36.5% Very Satisfied 46.3% Somewhat Satisfied 13.9% Somewhat Dissatisfied 3.4% Very Dissatisfied
Major Identified Problems:	10.1% Health Problems 12.1% Inappropriate Behavior 23.9% Transportation 13.1% Making Friends 22.2% Lack of Money 29.3% Lack of Work Skills 16.1% Lack of Leisure Activities 16.1% Caring for Children

TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH SEVERE HANDICAPS: A FOLLOW-UP STUDY

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Abstract

The present study assessed the employment status of 117 transition age young adults with moderate, severe, or profound mental retardation in Virginia. Data were collected by trained interviewers on variables related to unemployment level, wages earned, types of jobs, assistance available in job identification, et. The findings of this study indicated high unemployment rates of almost 88% with only 14 of the 117 persons holding real jobs in nonsheltered work environments. Wage accumulation was very limited. Implications of these results and other similar studies for future programming was then discussed.

Transition From School to Work for Individuals With Severe Handicaps: A Follow-Up Study

It has been almost a decade since children with severe handicaps were mandated by the federal government to receive a free publicly funded education. Much progress has been made during this time period as more has been learned about the most effective teaching techniques (Mulligan, Lacy, & Brown, 1982; Sailor, Brown, & Wilcox, 1982), the best approaches to curriculum (Snell, 1983; Wilcox, & Bellamy, 1982; Wehman, Bates, & Renzaglia, in press) and the most desirable service delivery arrangements (Certo, Haring, & York, 1983). There are virtually no curriculum areas which have not received some attention in the professional literature.

As children with severe handicaps finish school and become young adults, the question increasingly becomes: what will happen to them after they leave school? This question is being asked by the U. S. Dept. of Education (Will, 1984) and also the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services which, through the auspices of the Administration on Developmental Disabilities, commissioned a study by the Inspector General (April 13, 1984). The findings of this study suggest that well over 90,000 developmentally disabled students will leave school each year; in the Special Education Programs Office of the U. S. Department of Education, Will (1984) finds 250,000 handicapped youth will be leaving schools. While there are no definitive studies which at this point address the exact number of special education students graduating, we do know that the numbers are large and growing.

Congress has not been oblivious to this problem. In 1983 through the Education Amendments (P.L. 98-199) funds were set to establish secondary education and transition services in research and demonstration. In a statement from this legislation Congress says:

> "...the Subcommittee (on the Handicapped) recognizes the overwhelming paucity of effective programming for these handicapped youth, which eventually accounts for unnecessarily large numbers of handicapped adults who become unemployed and therefore dependent on society. These youth historically have not been adequately prepared for the changes and demands of life after high school. In addition, few, if any, are able to access or appropriately use traditional transitional services. Few services have been designed to assist handicapped young people in their efforts to enter the labor force or attain their goals of becoming self-sufficient adults, and contributing members to our society." (Section 626, P.L. 98-199).

A review of the literature, not surprisingly, does not turn up any published studies which specifically report what is happening to severely handicapped students the years immediately following school. Hasazi and her associates (1982) report an excellent follow-up study of all special education graduates in Vermont while Mithaug and Horiuchi (1983) have completed a similar comprehensive study in Colorado. Both of these studies suggest unemployment rates of 46 percent and 31 percent respectively with the Colorado study showing an unemployment rate almost twice as much if part-time jobs are omitted. The unemployment rate in the Hasazi study for those students with severe handicaps was much higher.

Brown and his colleagues did a case by case follow-up of severely handicapped graduates of the Madison, Wisconsin public schools in a 1971-1978 time period and then again from 1979-1982 (Brown, Ford, Nisbet, Shiraga, VanDeventer, Sweet, & Loomis, in press). Their findings indicated that in the first time frame 53 severely handicapped students graduated and only one

worked in competitive employment. The others were found in activity centers, workshops, or at home. These individuals had functioned primarily in a segregated school environment with no community based vocational program. However in January, 1983 a second study showed 27 of 38 graduates were working or volunteering in 25 nonsheltered environments with nine in sheltered environments and two at home. This improvement reflected more intensive vocational training efforts, community based instruction and integrated schools. The only other study specifically related to those with severe handicaps that we are aware of was by Donder (1982) who followed up on students labeled trainable mentally retarded and severely handicapped in a medium sized city in Central Illinois. This study, which was not published, was focused not specifically on employment status but rather parental perceptions of their son or daughter's functioning in domestic, community, recreation and vocational environments. The overwhelming majority of parents reported that their children stayed at home or work in segregated work environments like activity centers or sheltered workshops.

In order to go beyond these initial efforts and to investigate in more depth the employment status of severely handicapped young adults across a larger geographical area after leaving school, we undertook a follow-up study in Virginia. The purpose of this paper is to report the types of employment, employment level, types of services received, income earned, etc. that young adults with severe handicaps receive. The data reported in this paper were part of a larger study which we had conducted.

Method

Sample

Individuals labeled trainable, severely, and/or profoundly mentally retarded were selected as the only category of handicapping condition to

assess. This was done because most of the previous surveys mixed all handicapping conditions together and we were interested in looking only at those with moderate, severe, or profound mental retardation. Furthermore, as noted above this report was part of a larger study which looked at all levels of mental retardation. Unlike some of the previously reported surveys (Hasazi, et al., 1982), we did not attempt to collect data on every severely retarded individual who left school. Since Virginia is quite a diverse state geographically, it was decided to select urban, suburban, and rural locations to survey.

After consulting recent census figures, four different locations in Virginia were selected. The first was a highly urban inner city setting, the second was a large suburban area, the third was rural and suburban, and the final was very rural with a high poverty level. In only the last setting described did more than one school system participate. In this geographical area so few special education students were identified that four other small systems had to be involved. Within each of the settings, it was determined that all individuals with severe handicaps who had left school from the year of 1979 through 1983 would be contacted.

In each location, a professional was identified who would be familiar with the schools and adult services in the area and who would be the person who would conduct each survey. This mode of data collection was viewed as a means of reducing the problems associated with mail or telephone surveys. Each interviewer was paid and trained how to collect the data. The interviewer was responsible for meeting with appropriate school officials and retrieving the records which showed the names of all retarded individuals, addresses, and phone numbers. These records were only made available after permission had been received through our communication with the schools.

Actual names of participants never appeared on any of the collected surveys since the interviewers were asked to code the surveys and keep the true names in a separate confidential file. A total of 185 names was identified.

Instrument

A 60-item survey, many of the items with multiple choices, was generated. Of this survey about 25 of the items directly related to employment status. Questions were usually worded in either a forced choice yes-no format or a multiple choice format as briefly as possible in order to facilitate the length of time each interview required.

The instrument was developed after reviewing the Donder (1982), and Hasazi et. al. (1982) surveys which were the best pieces of work we could identify at the time. Some of the items were similar but modified for Virginia. Many of our items, however, were selected in order to determine the individual's current employment status as well as reasons associated with this status. We were less interested in trying to identify whether special education, vocational education, or vocational rehabilitation specifically had made an impact. The employment questions were subdivided into a series of questions for those who reported employment and another series for those who reported no employment.

Field Testing

Once we had constructed the survey, 15 mental retardation professionals in academic and direct service circles in Virginia were consulted to provide input and feedback. Once this information had been reviewed and integrated where possible, several graduate students in the severely handicapped area were trained and asked to give the survey to parents of individuals with moderate, severe and profound retardation. In this way we could determine what parts of the survey were clumsy, too time consuming, or irrelevant.

Again, from this information we made survey modification.

Interviewers

The four interviewers were the key to the success of the study. These individuals were all women with Bachelors or Masters degrees in the human services and with job titles of special education teacher, vocational placement specialist, or visiting teacher. They had lived and worked in their respective areas for at least five consecutive years.

All interviewers were brought to our central location for six hours and trained in how to conduct the survey. This procedure was done to minimize distortions in how the interviews were conducted and to maximize uniformity of presentation. Specifically, interviewers were taken through each survey item and each item was discussed. Length of time of interview was expected to be in the 30-45 minute period and parents were typically expected to be respondents. The interviewers were paid in two installments, when 50 percent of the interviews were completed and then at the end. A total of five months were anticipated for completion of the interviews (December, 1983-May, 1984).

Interviewers were monitored on a weekly basis. A graduate assistant called each interviewer once a week at a predetermined time to assess whether the previously agreed amount of interviews had been completed. Periodically the completed surveys were mailed to us for on-going coding of results and storage of information. Interviewers were given feedback on what the results in their location seemed to show.

Results

A total of 117 parents agreed to be interviewed for this survey. This total was divided into 30 percent urban, 31 percent suburban, and 38 percent rural-suburban, a fairly equal distribution. The interviewers did an excellent job in completing the interviews which turned out to be quite

lengthy, not as much in the actual interview but rather in setting up the necessary appointments. All of the respondents were natural parents. There was no way to determine the specific measured intellectual level of the persons with severe handicaps since individuals were classified only as being in trainable mentally retarded classes or severely/profoundly handicapped classes. A total of 72 students or 62 percent of the students attended segregated schools while the other 38 percent of the students had gone to integrated schools.

Employment Level and Income

Table 1 summarizes key employment and income level data. The employment level reported by the 117 respondents indicated that 25 of the individuals had jobs for an employment level of 21.6%. Eleven of these jobs were in sheltered workshops and 14 were in part or full time paid competitive employment. Two of the persons earned between $500 and $700 per month and five between $201 and $500. The other persons reported earning less than $100 per month. Over 80 percent of the total persons surveyed (117) indicate they have not earned more than $1000 since leaving school. The types of jobs, other than sheltered work, is janitorial, food service, and farm labor.

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Insert Table 1 About Here
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Fringe Benefits

As might be expected, fringe benefits were not very good. A total of 12 percent of the respondents indicated that sick time benefits were available with 24 percent receiving vacation time. Twelve percent received an insurance plan and eight percent received free meals. These percentages are on the basis of the 25 people who reported employment.

Assistance in Finding Job

Six out of the 25 persons reporting employment found their job with the help of a rehabilitation counselor while another five individuals received assistance from the school counselors. A total of 10 persons had help from a parent, relative, or found the job on their own. Another 20 percent or five persons located their job with the help of a special outside job placement program. Table 2 summarizes these data.

Insert Table 2 About Here

Reasons Given for Unemployment

The reason given for unemployment by the largest number of respondents (55%) was that there were no jobs in the area. This was followed by 14 percent who indicate that there was no one to help them get a job and another 10 percent who say there were no vocational job training services available. A total of 15 say that transportation is a barrier to employment with 8.7% indicating they don't want to give up Social Security Disability Income benefits. Table 3 reflects all of the reasons given.

Insert Table 3 About Here

Amount of Vocational Services Received

A total of 93 out of 117 persons or 79.5 percent indicate no rehabilitation services have been received while 17.9 percent indicate they have received occasional visits and 1.7 percent say they have received frequent job placement services. Similarly, 70 percent say they have never had local mental retardation services while 23 percent indicate participation in adult day programs for mainly nonvocational services. Over 95 percent have never received help from the Virginia Employment Commission.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that less than 12 percent or a total of 14 of the 117 individuals with moderate, severe, or profoundly mental retardation in several geographical parts of Virginia are employed in real jobs. Eleven people work in sheltered workshops. These figures are consistent with another study just completed in Virginia of parent attitudes toward employment of their mentally retarded sons and daughters (Hill, Seyfarth, Orelove, Wehman, & Banks, 1984). In this study, which was not limited to transition age students or only to those with severe handicaps, one of the items which was asked of the 263 participating parents was if their son or daughter worked competitively. Only 13 or 5% responded affirmatively. An overall unemployment rate of 80% is also similar to the findings of Hasazi and her associates (1982) and the Donder (1980) study.

There are not many positive conclusions which can be drawn from the employment and income level reported by the parents of these individuals with severe handicaps. This survey was taken during a time period (December, 1983 - May, 1984) when the Virginia and national economy was in a pronounced expansion with thousands of new jobs being created. Yet few respondents indicated that their children had cumulatively earned more than $1000 since leaving school. The unemployment level in this state and in three of the four locations surveyed was less than 5.5 percent, a very low level. Hence the very high level of response (55%) suggesting there were no jobs in the area as a principle reason for unemployment seems somewhat difficult to understand.

Those who were able to find employment reflected a need for help from professional sources with almost two-thirds coming from counselors and job programs. This finding differs markedly from a study of individuals with less severe handicaps where independent job seeking, parents and friends

played a much larger role (Wehman, Kregel, & Seyfarth, in press). It is notable, however, that almost 25 percent or six of those employed did get help from parents, friends, and relatives. Hasazi and associates (1982) found this to be a critically important network for job placements.

While it is very difficult to draw specific conclusions from these data as to the reasons for unemployment, it is clear that Social Security concerns, not wanting to work, and having to stay at home, three commonly cited reasons for unemployment were not reported significantly by these respondents. Almost half (46%) indicated that if they had vocational training, job placement services, and transportation help they would be willing to be employed. As noted earlier, the 55% figure of no jobs available seems questionable. One might speculate that with skilled job placement personnel available to locate jobs that this figure would shrirk dramatically.

The data in this report reflect school programs and adult services which occurred in the past decade. A number of the respondents did not have many years of special education. Most have not received functional curriculum and community based vocational training. There have been few coordinated efforts at transition (Wehman, Kregel, & Barcus, in press). Similarly, adult services have been singularly focused on segregated day programs which provide for little in the way of decent remuneration or integrated work opportunities. Hence the employment choices upon graduation have been severely limited.

The dismal employment and wage accumulation level reported by the severely handicapped respondents in this study serve as a baseline for us to assess past services and as a challenge to markedly improve vocational programming. The published literature available today (e.g., Bellamy, Horner, & Inman, 1979; Melia, 1984; Rusch, in press; Wehman, 1981; Wehman, Hill, Goodall, Cleveland, Brooke, & Pentecost, 1982) would seem to suggest that

persons with severe handicaps have far greater employment capabilities. However, most of these reports are research and demonstration and have not filtered substantially into local school systems and community service programs. Therefore, the challenge is greater than ever before to encourage service delivery systems to improve their operation and leverage existing dollars in the system for more services of higher quality. More demonstrations are undoubtedly required because too many professionals in key positions such as the special education teacher and rehabilitation counselor are skeptical of the employment abilities of persons with severe handicaps. The special education teacher can set the tone with parents and design an appropriate functional program. The rehabilitation counselor can serve as a broker to utilize funds for purchasing specialized services to place and maintain a client into a job (Hill, Hill, Wehman, Revell, Dickerson, & Noble, 1985).

In closing, this report is the first study to examine the employment status of young adults with severe handicaps on a statewide basis. The results were not positive but present an initial level from which to assess improved programmatic efforts upon. Other studies in different states are needed for further documentation of the current employment situation of transition age youth with severe handicaps.

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Table 1

Employment Level and Income of Severely Handicapped Young Adults
(N=117)

Unemployed (92)	79.1%
Sheltered Employment (11)	9%
Part or Full Time Paid Employment (14)	11.9%

8% (2)	$501-700/Month
21% (6)	$201-$500/Month
54% (13)	$51-$100/Month
17% (4)	$0 - $50/Month

Table 2

Assistance in Finding Job (N=25)

School Guidance Assistance	24%
Rehabilitation Counselor Assistance	20%
Special Job Placement Program	20%
Independently	12%
Parent	12%
Relative	4%
Friend	8%

Table 3

Reasons Given For Unemployment
(N=92)

No Jobs in Area	55.4%
No One to Help Get Job	14.1%
No One to Provide Vocational Training	16.3%
No Transportation	15.2%
Social Security Disability Concerns	8.7%
Unable to Work	6.5%
Don't Want To Work	3.3%
Needed At Home	1.1%

UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG HANDICAPPED YOUTH: WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present a supported work approach to employment services which is designed to foster job placement and job retention for handicapped youth. Based upon the repeated success of the supported work model with moderately/severely handicapped young adults, it appears that it is time to apply this model to the job placement of students in public schools. This model suggests some different ways to solve this pressing unemployment problem. Such an undertaking requires extensive changes in the curriculum, service delivery system and administrative arrangements used with secondary programs for students with handicaps. What the implementation problems are in integrating this model into school systems and how they might be solved are discussed.

Unemployment Among Handicapped Youth: What Is The Role of The Public Schools?

One measure of the effectiveness and success of special education programs is the employability of students who graduate or leave school. Although the vocational outlook for handicapped students is not the only responsibility of special education programs, positive employment outcomes surely must be considered a high priority.

Since unemployment rates of 50% to 75% for handicapped people are quite high (U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1983), it would appear that both secondary and adult programs are not working to the extent they need to be. Furthermore, follow-up data of special education graduates in Vermont (Hasazi, Preskill, Gordon, & Collins, 1982), Colorado (Mithaug & Horiuvuci, 1973) and Virginia (Wehman, Kregel, & Zoller, 1984) confirm these high levels of unemployment for students recently leaving special education. In the case of secondary special education programs, the responsibility of providing full employment for students before graduation is rarely assumed by the public schools. Vocational education, rehabilitation, and other similar types of programs often provide direct payments to employers and students as a substitute for unsubsidized employment. The emphasis these programs put on job placement services which stress unsubsidized competitive employment is subject to debate.

A careful evaluation of what might be altered in curriculum, service delivery system or other administrative arrangements that could significantly improve the unemployment problem is overdue. Previous experiences at job placement and competitive employment for handicapped individuals (Rudrud, Ziarnak, Bernstein, & Ferrara, 1984; Rusch & Mithaug, 1980; Wehman, 1981; Wilcox & Bellamy, 1983), suggest that the traditional classroom, work-study, and cooperative education type models need to be reexamined especially in terms of competitive employment outcomes

for students prior to graduation. Furthermore, it must be recognized that automatic placement into sheltered workshops and adult activity centers is not necessarily desirable or optimal due to the segregated nature of those placements and poor wages.

Therefore, it is the purpose of this paper to present a supported work approach to employment services which is designed to foster job placement and job retention for handicapped youth. This model suggests some different ways to solve this pressing unemployment problem. Later sections of the paper describe what the implementation problems are in this model and how they might be solved.

A Supported Work Approach to Overcoming the Unemployment Problem

The principle theme characterizing a supported work model (Wehman & Kregel, 1984) is that competitive job placement is not the only sufficient outcome in a vocational education program, but that job retention is equally important. Furthermore employment must provide for unsubsidized wages from an employer committed to hiring the student. With a supported work approach professional staff are actively involved in all aspects of the student's employment. These aspects are: 1) job placement, 2) job site training upon employment, 3) on-going assessment of student progress, and 4) follow-along of the student and transition into adult services.

Key Assumptions Underlying Use of a Supported Work Model

The success of any job placement will be influenced by several assumptions. The degree with which these assumptions can be met, will influence how well the placement meets the student's and employer's needs. These assumptions include:

1) The community labor market has been screened or assessed for the type of jobs which appear likely to have vacancies or turnover, and which appear to be within

the capacity of the student(s) which are to be placed.

2) A pre-employment vocational program has provided at least a limited degree of training for students; this training will provide competency in some of the vocational skills which may be required in the target types of jobs and ideally begin at early age in school (Wehman, 1983).

3) An evaluation of student adaptive behaviors, parent/caretaker attitudes, transportation possibilities, etc. has been undertaken with such data available to staff working within the supported work model (Phelps & McCarty, 1984).

If any of the above assumptions are not met, it will not preclude placement. But it will slow down the placement and retention process and be more expensive for staff to implement job site training. Furthermore, completion of these activities should facilitate the transition process into adult programs which might provide placement or follow-along if placement is already made.

Program Component I: Job Placement

The placement of the student into a job appropriate to his or her abilities is the first major component of the supported work model. The process of job placement involves more than simply finding a job for a student. Major aspects of the job placement process include:

a) matching job needs to student abilities or potential

b) facilitating employer communications with the student

c) facilitating parent or caretaker communications

d) establishing travel arrangements or providing travel training

e) analyzing the job environment to verify all potential obstacles which may arise

There are several key points to highlight about job placement within the supported work model. First, effective placement is predicted on an accurate

analysis of work environment requirements. This process has been variously referred to as ecological analysis (Wehman, 1981), top-down curriculum (Brown, Branston-McClean, Baumgart, Vincent, Falvey & Schroeder, 1979), or job analysis (Vandergoot & Worrall, 1979). It is critical that adequate detail be provided in terms of job requirements, characteristics of the work environment, and other features which may influence job retention. This detail will then facilitate the job match, that is, pairing job requirements with student abilities.

The second key point is that job placement can take place with students who do not possess all the necessary work or social skill competencies for immediate job success. The strength of the supported work model is that whoever is making the placement knows that job site help will be available once the placement formally occurs. This is a significant departure from traditional placement approaches which require the student to be quite "job ready".

A third important element is that travel, social security, job interview, and other non-work related factors are actively handled in the job placement process. Within a more traditional placement frame-work it is often accepted that the student or caretaker will handle most of these concerns if a job is made available. With moderately and severely retarded youth job placement would be impossible or highly unlikely without this type of support.

Job placement is frequently done not by a specialist in placement but by a job coordinator or work experience specialist. This job coordinator handles not only placement but all aspects of the supported work process. A virtue of this approach is continuity across all components of the model. On the other hand, a drawback may be having less time to concentrate exclusively on job identification. Our experiences have shown, however, that informal job contacts are quite valuable and that jobs arise from the good relations which job coordinators develop with employers.

Program Component II: Job Site Training and Advocacy

As noted earlier, on-the-job training is certainly not a new concept. However, in most of the models there is not an active involvement early in the placement from a trained professional staff person. Usually employers are seen as the "trainers" or no specific training is provided but instead brief and infrequent follow-up checks or visits are made after the placement. In short, a major step, i.e. skill training and adjustment to the work environment, is omitted.

Our experiences in placement, as well as communication with others using a supported work approach, strongly indicate that job site training and advocacy is an essential feature of the supported work model. Two major processes are involved: a) behavioral training of skills and b) advocacy on behalf of the student at the job site. There is little research literature on applications of behavioral training to vocational skills in nonsheltered or competitive work environments. Rusch has clearly been the leader in this regard with studies related to acquisition of selected work skills (Schutz, Joste, Rusch, & Lamson, 1980), time-telling (Sowers, Rusch, Connis, & Cummings, 1980), time on-task on job (Rusch, Connis, & Sowers, 1980), reducing inappropriate self-stimulating behaviors (Rusch, Weithers, Menchetti, & Schutz, 1980), as well as selected communication training (Karlan & Rusch, 1982). It is apparent to us that the technology of behavioral training needs to be extended into nonsheltered work environments with individuals who heretofore have been considered poor candidates for competitive employment. We have begun to barely scratch the surface in this area. Applications of reinforcement principles, manipulation of antecedent stimulus conditions, and use of coworkers as peer trainers are all areas which require closer investigation.

Advocacy or promotion of the student is the other principle feature of this component. In some cases, handicapped workers will need less time spent on training and more time spent on orientation to the new job site. Orientation might

include these types of activities on the part of the job coordinator: locating restroom facilities; locating cafeteria and/or vending machines, working out communication problems between student and coworkers; communicating with parents/caretakers about how the job is going; and counseling student on improving general work behaviors (getting to work on time, appropriate appearance, etc.).

Program Component III: On-going Assessment

A major distinctive feature which differentiates the supported work model and some traditional approaches to job placement is on-going assessment or monitoring of how the student is performing. Typically, a rehabilitaton counselor will place a client and then possibly check with employers at some point in the future to see how things are working out. This type of "assessment" is especially insufficient with more severely handicapped youth who may have been terminated or quit by then (Brolin, 1982).

There is a need to immediately gauge the employer's perceptions of the handicapped student's performance once a placement is made. There will usually be two major indicators of performance: supervisor evaluation data and performance data. Although quantifiable data are the most desirable, in some instances verbal feedback to an on-site staff person may be sufficient. The amount of assessment data collected is clearly related to variables such as the ability level of the student, amount of staff available for data collection, and above all the specific need for data to evaluate a certain problem.

Program Component IV: Follow-Along and Transition

Follow-up is an activity or service which is consistently referred to in the rehabilitation system, yet it is unclear how much follow-up is provided to place clients. For example, the nature of the follow-up in terms of frequency of employer contact, communication with clients, and re-placement into an alternative job are all variables which influence the quality of placement.

In one of the few papers which address the quality of follow-up issue (Hill, Cleveland, Pendleton, and Wehman 1982) list regular on-site visits to employers, phone calls, periodic review of supervisor evaluation, client progress reports, and parent evaluations as ways in which to promote retention. Ultimately, this component of the supported work model may be the most critical since handicapped workers are often immediately at risk of losing their jobs in competitive environments unless some type of retention plan is devised.

As a student nears the age or competence level at which graduation is appropriate, then a transition plan must be put into effect. Such a transition plan should indicate which adult service provider(s) will pick up the follow-along and retention aspect of the individual's employment status. This transfer of responsibility is crucial to providing a continuity of services.

Supported Work in the Public Schools: Logistical Considerations

To date most public school systems have not put into practice the above described employment model of job placement. Obviously, there are significant difficulties in adopting this type of vocational service delivery arrangment, ranging from transportation concerns to a broader philosophical question of just how much responsibility the schools hold for unsubsidized competitive placement and retention of handicapped students. Nonhandicapped students rarely receive this type of specialized service. Yet serious questions can be raised about the viability of longitudinal and intensive special education programs which fail to provide the same attention to a meaningful employment outcome. It is our position that the schools must take a more aggressive role in facilitating employment. In the sections which follow we present what some of these logistical problems are for implementation and possible strategies for managing the problems.

Administrative Organization

Programs within public schools to help handicapped youth are usually a network of disciplines established to meet the various educational needs of handicapped students. Generally each discipline such as vocational education, special education, occupational therapy, etc. is mandated to provide specific services. Often these disciplines experience difficulty in providing their service without infringing on the services provided by others. Many times communication between disciplines is difficult to execute. In addition, programmatic decisions for the disabled lie in the hands of persons far removed from day to day instruction. Often decisions to implement program changes such as community based training and job placement are based on administrative convenience rather than on the needs of the students. The result is a fragmentation of service delivery. Each discipline frequency implements instructional objectives in isolation. The individual education plan of each student is fragmented with no longitudinal goal such as employment.

Intraagency coordination of services is a critical first step in providing appropriate services. The utilization of a teaming approach which systematically combines the thinking of various school personnel to develop comprehensive longitudinal individualized programs is necessary. Leadership and organizational roles need to be designated for the efficient administration of teamings. Major tasks of teaming include gathering comprehensive information about a student, analyzing and synthesizing these findings into goals and objectives and ultimately designing a longitudinal educational plan. Teamings can result in the fullest and most efficient utilization of all school resources available.

Obviously other resources in the community should be utilized. Unfortunately, many special education administrators are not fully aware of what services are available to students upon graduation. Tragically, many graduates

leave school with no idea of where or how to obtain services. They join the ranks of the unemployed and continue to be a liability to the community rather than a contributor to the tax base. Awareness of where graduates go upon completion of public school programs has direct bearing on curricular content and service delivery strategies of the programs. Knowledge of what services are available in the community; how these services are provided; who is eligible; how many individuals can be served; and what happens to individuals not included in the services; are critical in the management of educational programs for the disabled. Establishment of formal relationships between public school systems and post school service providers is imperative. These agencies should identify a contact person within each system. Information exchange must occur to identify the legislative mandates, types of services provided, eligibility requirements and individualized planning procedures of each agency. Intensive staff development to enable administrators and direct service personnel to develop an understanding of the contributions and limitations of other agencies should be conducted. This should result in a restructuring of overall service delivery to eliminate duplication of services and ensure that options are available to meet the service needs of disabled individuals. The final result is involvement of appropriate agencies in joint planning activities in order to ensure appropriate service delivery to the disabled citizens within the community.

Community References Training

Vocational education programs frequently are not based on positions currently available in the community. It is common to find programs designed around materials readily available to the program. Often this includes the use of commercially available curriculums. Thus it is common to see horticulture, furniture refinishing and bench work activities. Programs will train individuals on the operation of a drill press, to sort and collate items or to produce craft

items. An assumption is made that the handicapped individuals will adjust, function appropriately, and transfer trained skills to new environments with minimal assistance.

It is well documented that this can not be assumed with handicapped individuals (cf. Wehman & Hill, 1982). Training activities must be designed to prepare persons for vocational opportunities that are available in the local community. To ensure this outcome, school personnel must continuously assess available employment and analyze the specific skills required for successful performance.

It is generally accepted that in order to prepare persons for life and work in the nonhandicapped world, it is necessary to supply firsthand exposure to the expectations of the real world. Therefore, it is imperative that training occur in integrated settings. Emphasis is placed on training occurring as much as possible in integrated settings, not in isolated facilities for the handicapped. The effective vocational training program also includes regular exposure to natural work settings. The students should train and work in the community whenever possible. This exposes them to community and work expectations. In addition, future employers and coworkers are exposed to their potential as reliable employees.

Business Needs

The public schools contact with the business community needs to continue to improve and expand. The business community is growing increasingly concerned about the availability of appropriately trained individuals. Many business people have expressed concerns that they have to train most employees. This training is an expensive proposition for businesses.

More vocational education programs need to be directed at the needs of the local businesses. One important aspect of a supported work approach is that a

work experience specialist will be in the field all the time working with students and employers. This is an excellent way to learn what business needs truly are.

Vocational programs should actively seek input from the business community. The establishment of business advisory council will be helpful to formalize relationships between the schools and the business community.

Transportation

Transportation is a critical issue which has a profound effect on the success of supported work programs. Financing transportation for community-based instruction can be a large barrier, but does not have to be. Administrators should look at how they handle transportation for nonhandicapped students participating in similar vocational programs. The same options utilized with the nonhandicapped students should be available to handicapped students.

In many communities, public transportation options (city bus system, taxi cabs) are available. Walking in some instances is another viable alternative. Both of these options should be encouraged because of their long term availability. If an individual is unable to get to work they are unemployable. By instilling the above skills, the individual increased the potential of retaining their job.

Unfortunately, not all programs have access to public transportation or are located within walking distance to potential jobs. In these situations, teachers can be utilized for initial transportation to the work site. Efforts can then be exerted to get the individual worker into a car pool. They will have to pay for this option, but this is a reality they must deal with now and in the future to remain employed. In other instances, parents or volunteers can provide transportation although this is not the best solution. The use of public school vehicles/teachers/family cars should only be used if normal community transportation options are not available.

Liability

A related obstacle to implementing employment programs is liability. School systems are skeptical of allowing training in the community due to the question of who is responsible if an individual (student, teacher) is injured. The initial administrative response is to deny community training on the premise that there are too many risks.

School systems have teacher liability insurance, however, this insurance usually covers instructional activities. These policies can provide effective reassurance to administrators. Additional coverage may be obtained through the insurance carrier if the district feels the need.

Students involved in community training should have written approval from their parent(s)/guardian. This should be an informed consent document. Only individuals with this form on file should be involved in job site training. In addition, before training occurs the district should assure that insurance coverage is available on all students. Often families are offered insurance coverage for their child during the school day for a nominal fee. This liability insurance covers all instructional activities. It should be a requirement for any student involved in community training.

Students that have been placed into a position and are being paid a wage should be covered by the employer. The same coverage, should be available to them that is available to any other employee in that business. The trainers will be covere through the school system policy.

Organization and Management of Personnel

Public school systems operate predominately from a school based instructional model. Traditionally schools do not employ personnel to implement community based job placement. Administratively it is convenient to restrict movement of individuals into the community. Large systems establish departments (special education,

vocational education, vocational rehabilitation, etc.) who share responsibility of instruction for the handicapped. These departments strongly hold to traditional program implementation strategies. Often the major focus of program implementation is on providing mandated services and assuring that appropriate documentation is on file.

Successful implementation of a supported work program requires innovative organization and management of personnel. The first step is the commitment to a philosophy of preparing students to be productive members of the adult community. It is generally accepted that in order to prepare persons for life and work it is necessary to expose them to the real world. Thus, it is crucial that the students train and work in the community whenever possible.

Administration policies should be outlined for the implementation of all activities. Specific policies regarding liability and transportation must be clearly established. General guidelines for service delivery should be stated. We suggest that all students ages 12-15 should receive a minimum of two hours per day in organized vocational training. Individuals ages 16-18 should receive a minimum of three hours per day in job training sites. Students over the age of 18 should be placed in a competitive job or on training sites. Students over the age of 18 should be placed in a competitive job for the majority of the school day. Related community based training should be implemented concommitent to the vocational training. Community based training experiences should be scheduled before in-school activities. All scheduling should reflect class and individual instructional priorities. In addition, specific times should be established for exchange of information (teamings) between staff members (i.e. teachers, aides, therapists).

Related service perscnnel (speech therapist, occupational therapist, physical therapists, etc.) should provide their services during community based training.

These individuals should be involved in instruction that will increase the probability that individuals can obtain and hold a competitive job. Training should be implemented within the community or specific job site. Speech therapists can work on improving socialization skills with coworkers, ability to make needs known in grocery stores, etc. The occupational and/or physical therapist should improve the strength and stamina for individual in employment positions. In addition, these professionals can be involved in follow-up/ monitoring activities of competitively employment individuals.

Staff should be hired and given job placement and training responsibility. These individuals should focus on job identification, job training and follow-up. This should be their full time responsibility. Each trainer should attempt to place one person every 2 months in a competitive employment position. The maximum placement and follow-up caseload for an effective trainer should be 15. The trainer should have rsponsibility for coordination of services for these individuals.

Unfortunately, economic times are such that many systems are unable to hire new personnel to do job placement. This should not prevent them from implementing the supported work model on a small scale. Schedules can be designed so that teachers can be freed from classroom responsibility. By scheduling activities such as music, art, etc. back to back, a teacher can be freed up to a half day for job-site training. Utilization of related service personnel, paraparofessionals and administrators can provide additional personnel for training and follow-up in competitive employment sites. Systems utilizing this approach should initially identify one classroom of individuals for job-site training and placement. The system many only be able to focus on part time work in the beginning. Once a successful track record is established the need for full time job placement

personnel can be justified and increase the potential of employing job placement staff within the system.

Summary

In the past few years we have seen dramatic changes in the multitude of services available to handicapped individuals. Based upon the repeated success of the supported work model with moderately/severely handicapped adults, it appears that it is time to apply this model to the job placement of students in public schools. Such an undertaking requires extensive changes in the curriculum, service delivery system and administrative arrangements used with the handicapped in secondary programs.

Educators can no longer be satisfied with instructional technology that moves students through nonfunctional programs which perpetuate the unemployment statistics. Decisive action needs to be taken toward improving the employment outcomes. We need to focus on quality service which puts into practice the available technology based on research and demonstration programs of recent years.

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Section III: Parent Involvement

Parents have been left out of the employment planning process too often. Yet we know that viable competitive employment programs cannot work without a full partnership with parents. Hence in this section we present survey data on parental attitudes toward work, guidelines for parents in advocating employment, and an inventory of what skills parents think are most important for training. This section will be further expanded with our next volume.